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THE GUILD TEXT BOOKS

The Old Testament and Its Contents

By the Rev.
Prof. James Robertson, D.D.
Of the University of Glasgow

New York Chicago Toronto
Fleming H. Revell Company
Publishers of Evangelical Literature

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE Editors have great satisfaction in issuing this contribution to the Guild and Bible-Class series from the pen of Professor Robertson of the University of Glasgow. The subject is one of special interest and importance at the present time, and they believe the manual will supply a widely-felt want. It will be understood, that while in general sympathy with the learned author's leading views, neither the Editors nor the Committee under whose auspices the book is published, are to be held as committed to all the critical opinions expressed in it.

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PREFACE

In the preparation of the present text-book, the primary consideration has been its utility as a means of instruction. Opinions will differ as to the relative importance of the topics that had to be treated, and the proportion of space that ought to be assigned to different branches of the subject. The writer has kept continually in view the circumstances of young people in Guilds and Bible-Classes; and, according to the best of his judgment, has given the information they are most likely to desire, in such a form as will neither perplex nor mislead them. References to larger works have been purposely omitted in an elementary handbook. Teachers of classes and directors of guilds, who, presumably, know whither to turn for fuller details, will be able to supplement what is here stated in outline, and will be guided by the circumstances of their pupils in the recommendation of other books.

Though primarily intended for young people in classes, a book of this limited compass may be found of some service to others who are not in a

position to make use of more elaborate works. It is sent forth in the earnest hope that it may promote an intelligent acquaintance with the Old Testament, and lead to a deeper appreciation of its contents.

The writer desires to make grateful acknowledgment of the valuable suggestions he has received from the general Editors, and also to express his deep obligations to the Rev. Robert S. Kemp, B.D., minister of Insch, who has bestowed the greatest pains on the correction of the proofs.

ABBREVIATIONS EMPLOYED

R.V. = Revised Version.
A.V. = Authorised Version.
MS., MSS. = Manuscript, Manuscripts.
LXX. = Septuagint.
f. or ff. (after a number) = *following* verse or verses.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS CONTENTS

PART I

THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A WHOLE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

§ 1. THE word **Bible** is the equivalent of a Greek word which properly means *books*. It was applied by the Fathers of the Church sometimes to the books of the Old Testament alone, just as we find the expression "the books" employed in Daniel ix. 2 (R.V.), to denote the Sacred Writings which were then in existence; and sometimes to all the books of the Bible. In course of time, the completed collection of books forming the Old and New Testaments being regarded as one whole, the word Bible came to be used as a singular name for the **Holy Scriptures**. What the whole Bible is to the Christian Church, the Old Testament is to the Jews,—the standard of faith and the rule of life. The word **Testament** is the translation of a word which is more frequently rendered *Covenant*, and

is applied to the one part or the other of Scripture with reference to the **old** and the **new** dispensations to which they respectively belong.

§ 2. Before undertaking the study of a book, we naturally ask what the book is, and whence it has come. The consideration of such questions in regard to the Bible goes by the name of Bible **Introduction**; and since the Old Testament (as well as the New) is one whole composed of many parts, it is evident that the inquiry before us is twofold. We have to inquire, in the first place, under what circumstances and at what time the books were collected into one whole, and by what process the completed collection has been handed down to our own times; and this is called **General** Introduction. And, in the second place, we have to look at the individual books of which the Old Testament is made up, to observe their contents and character, and to ascertain, if possible, their literary history; which again is called **Particular** or Special Introduction. The contents of the present handbook will accordingly fall into these parts:—

Part I. General Introduction, comprising:—
1. The collection of the Old Testament Scriptures (§§ 3-15).
2. The transmission of the Old Testament Scriptures (§§ 16-19).

Part II. Particular Introduction, viz. an examination of the individual books (§§ 20-92).

CHAPTER II

THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

§ 3. THE **books of the Old Testament** are, in our English Bible, thirty-nine in number; and, in the order in which they are arranged, they may be thus classified:—

I.	*Law*, Genesis to Deuteronomy .	5 books
II.	*History*, Joshua to Esther .	12 „
III.	*Poetry*, Job to Song of Solomon .	5 „
IV.	*Prophecy*, Isaiah to Malachi .	17 „
		39

They were all originally written in Hebrew, with the exception of some portions in a few of the later books, which are in a kindred dialect, *Aramaic;* and they have been preserved by the Jewish people in their sacred language. **The Hebrew Bible** contains all the books enumerated above, and no more; but there is a difference in the arrangement and in the total number of the books, as exhibited in the table on the next page. The English Bible has followed the order of the old versions (see § 6); and a glance at the table will show that the difference in the

total number has arisen from a different mode of enumeration. The Hebrew Bible consists of **twenty-four books**, so that the Jews often speak of it as the "four-and-twenty"; and the whole is arranged in **three divisions**, thus :—

I. **Law**, *i.e.* the Pentateuch or the five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	5	books
II. **Prophets**, viz. :—		
1. Former prophets: (*a*) Joshua, (*b*) Judges, (*c*) Samuel, (*d*) Kings	4	,,
2. Latter prophets: (*a*) Isaiah, (*b*) Jeremiah, (*c*) Ezekiel, (*d*) the twelve (minor prophets) . . .	4	,,
III. **Writings**, which we usually designate *Hagiographa*, *i.e.* Sacred Writings. They are classed thus :—		
1. Three books (*a*) Psalms, (*b*) Proverbs, (*c*) Job . .	3	,,
2. Five rolls (*a*) Song of Songs, (*b*) Ruth, (*c*) Lamentations, (*d*) Ecclesiastes, (*e*) Esther	5	,,
3. (*a*) Daniel, (*b*) Ezra and Nehemiah, (*c*) the Chronicles	3	,,
	24	

1. In regard to the table it is to be noted that the books forming the division of Law are partly historical

in contents, that the so-called Former Prophets are historical, that the book of Daniel is not reckoned among the "Prophets," and that the twelve minor prophets are reckoned *one* book. The five *rolls* are so called because it was customary to write each of them on a separate roll, for reading on five special occasions (§§ 15, 83).

2. The reason for enumerating the books in the order in which they are arranged in the Hebrew Bible will appear presently, when we come to consider the history of the Canon.

§ 4. The books that have been enumerated constitute what is called the **Canon** or canonical books **of the Old Testament.** The Greek word *Canon* denoted originally a measuring-rod or line. From this it came to mean a standard or test of measurement, and then the space or sphere defined or marked off by such a measure. As applied to a collection of books, the term would indicate, from one point of view, that the books were the expression, in a written form, of the **rule of faith**; or, from another point of view, that the books were separated and **marked off from other books,** owing to their possessing special characteristics. In the former sense, canonical books would be distinguished from books of general literature; in the latter, from books called apocryphal. It is not till the fourth century of the Christian era that we find the term Canon applied to Holy Scripture; but the mere fact that the Jews, from an early period, set apart the books of the Old Testament, and only those books, is a proof that they regarded them with both the ideas which the term Canon suggests. It comes to be a difficult though very important matter to determine at what time and on what grounds the collection of books into a

canon was made. We cannot assume that the thing was done all at once, or once for all, nor are we to suppose that the religious guides of the Jews first determined what a Canon should be, and then looked for books or set about writing books, which should fulfil the conditions. There are three things that should be borne in mind by us in considering this subject: (1) That books must have been in existence—and presumably for a considerable time in existence—before they would be collected into an authoritative Canon. (2) That the books so collected must have been regarded as possessing special characteristics and claims. (3) That there must have been circumstances in the external or internal history of the Jewish people furnishing an occasion for the collection of sacred books for sacred use.

1. The first of these three points is important, for we must distinguish between the time at which a book was admitted into the Canon and the date of its authorship. The second point is forced on our attention by the existence of the apocryphal books (§ 15, 2). The third is suggested by many considerations which go to prove that the formation of the Canon was a gradual process.

CHAPTER III

EVIDENCES OF A COMPLETED CANON

5. THE manner in which the "Scriptures" are **uoted** or **referred to** in the **New Testament** aves little room to doubt that, in the time of the rst writers of the New Testament, the collection f books now embraced in the Old Testament anon was well known and of long existence. rom the language employed by Christ and the postles in their appeals to **Scripture,** no unpre-diced mind would conclude that the Canon of ie Old Testament was of recent date or of ndefined compass, or that any doubt prevailed as the authority of the books of which it was com-osed.[1] Nearly every book of the Old Testament quoted or referred to in the New. Almost all ie **quotations** or **references** to "Scripture" in ie New Testament are unmistakably found in ie canonical books of the Old Testament. And, though the New Testament writers in all prob-ility were acquainted with other books which re not in the Canon, or even referred to them for eneral purposes,[2] there is no evidence that they

[1] See Matt. xxii. 29; Acts xviii. 24; Rom. i. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 15.
[2] See, for example, 2 Tim. iii. 8; Jude 14-16.

placed such books on the same level with the canonical books as authoritative Scripture. Moreover, in one passage (Luke xxiv. 44), the **threefold division** of the Canon seems to be referred to in the words, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me," the "psalms" being mentioned as the first book of the third division.[1] All this leaves on the mind the impression that at the beginning of the Christian era there was a collection of canonical books of long standing and of undisputed authority; and as the canonical collection which has come down to us is known to be the collection which was accepted among the Jews of Palestine, the conclusion to which we are brought is that the existing Canon was by that time a thing of high antiquity.

1. There are, indeed, a few passages in the New Testament containing references to Scripture which, taken verbally, are not precisely found in the Old Testament books. See, *e.g.*, Matt. xxvii. 9; Luke xi. 49; John vii. 38; 1 Cor. ii. 9; Eph. v. 14. These are variously explained by commentators; but it is certainly unwarrantable to conclude, as some have done, that they must be quotations from apocryphal books which were recognised as "Scripture" in the same sense as canonical writings.

2. The only Old Testament books which are neither quoted nor referred to in the New are Obadiah and Nahum of the minor prophets; Ezra and Nehemiah; Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes; but we cannot infer from this silence that these books were not in the Canon.

[1] Compare John vi. 45; Acts vii. 42, xiii. 40.

3. It may be that we have another indication of the tripartite division of the Canon in Matt. xxiii. 35 and Luke xi. 51, for Zechariah is the last-mentioned martyr in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chron. xxiv. 20-22), which was the closing book of the Hebrew Canon.

§ 6. The **testimony of Josephus** (born A.D. 37-38, and lived till about A.D. 110) is to the same effect, and is even more explicit. Speaking of the trustworthiness of the documents relating the history of his nation, he says,[1] "For it is not the case with us to have vast numbers of books disagreeing and conflicting with one another. We have but **two-and-twenty** containing the history of all time, **books** that are justly believed in" (or, according to the usual reading, "believed to be divine"). Then, after stating the contents of these books under three heads, he proceeds; "From the days of Artaxerxes to our own times every event has indeed been recorded. But these recent records have not been deemed worthy of equal credit with those which preceded them, on account of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. There is practical proof of the spirit in which we treat our Scriptures. For, although so great an interval of time has now passed, not a soul has ventured either **to add**, or to **remove**, or to **alter** a syllable, and it is the instinct of every Jew, from the day of his birth, to consider these Scriptures as **the teaching of God**, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to lay down his life in their behalf." In this passage Josephus, speaking for his nation and expressing the universal Jewish belief of his time, asserts that the Canon

[1] Contra Apionem, i. 8.

of Scripture had been long completed, the last of the books contained in it having been composed not later than the time of Artaxerxes (by whom he means the king called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther). We gather also from his statement that the collection comprised the same books as form our present Old Testament. Though he mentions only twenty-two books, it is most probable that he reckoned Ruth as forming one with Judges, and Lamentations along with Jeremiah, as we find other writers doing. And if he does not arrange the books in the Hebrew order, nor name particularly the three divisions of the Canon, this is to be accounted for by the fact that he wrote in Greek to readers who were familiar with the Greek Version, in which the books are differently arranged.

1. We may, with the greatest probability, classify the twenty-two books named by Josephus in the following order: (*a*) the "books of Moses which comprise the laws and the earliest traditions, from the creation of mankind down to the time of his death," *i.e.* the five books of the Pentateuch. (*b*) The *thirteen* books by "the prophets who succeeded Moses," and "wrote the history of the events that occurred in their own time," would be Joshua, Judges and Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Prophets. (*c*) "The remaining four documents comprise hymns to God and practical precepts to men," and would be Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.

§ 7. The **Septuagint** is the name given to the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was in use among Greek-speaking Jews in New Testament times, and from which the New Testament

writers, writing for Greek-speaking people, made quotation. This version **contains all the canonical books** of the Old Testament in what is virtually the same form. We have reliable information of the time at which the translation was undertaken, viz. in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who reigned from B.C. 284 to 247,—though the date of its completion is not so certain. Since it is natural to suppose that the books were regarded as canonical before they were translated, we may conclude that a Canon of some compass existed before the translation was undertaken, and that the whole Canon existed before it was concluded. Seeing, however, that the date of completion of the translation is uncertain, and seeing also that in the Septuagint collection there are included other books besides the canonical books of the Hebrew Bible, we must look for other evidence of the independent existence and high authority of the Canon.

1. The Septuagint contains, besides the books of the Hebrew Canon, and mixed with them, the Books of the Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and the other books which we generally designate the Apocrypha of the Old Testament (see below § 15, 2).

2. In the Septuagint, at the close of the book of Esther, there is a note stating that the translation of that book was introduced in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, which would be B.C. 178 (if Ptolemy VI. is referred to) or B.C. 114 (if it is Ptolemy VIII.) And, no doubt by the time this was done, the rest of the books would have been translated.

§ 8. **The books of the Maccabees** belong to about **B.C. 100**, and thus carry us back more than

a century before Josephus. In these books, although we do not find precise information in regard to the Canon, we come upon notices and expressions which imply the existence of canonical books. Thus, in the **first book** (1 Macc. xii. 9), we find a reference to "the sacred books which are in our hands," a mode of speech that could only have been employed with reference to a special number of books held peculiarly sacred. The book also contains (ch. vii. 16, 17) a quotation from Ps. lxxix. 2, 3. In the **second book** there is a passage of more interest. It forms part of one of the two letters prefixed to the book (I. 1-II. 18), purporting to have been sent by the Jews of Palestine to their brethren in Egypt, in the year B.C. 144, and is in the following terms: "And the same things also were reported in the records, viz. the memoirs of Nehemiah; and how he, founding a library, gathered together the books concerning the kings and prophets, and the books (or *things*) of David, and epistles of kings concerning holy gifts. And in like manner also Judas gathered together all those books that had been scattered, by reason of the wars we had, and they are with us" (II. 13, 14). There are doubts as to the date and authenticity of this passage; but, taking it as at least as early as the main portion of the book, we may regard it as giving expression to a belief current at that time, that certain books "concerning the kings and prophets, and those of David," etc., were brought together under Nehemiah as part of a "library" formed by him; and also that Judas, *i.e.* the Maccabee, gathered together after the war the books which in the writer's time were reverently

preserved. It is to be remembered that these statements occur in books which form part of the Septuagint collection; and it is plain that the writers, in referring in such terms to the books in question, place them on a higher level than their own productions.

1. The reference to Nehemiah is remarkable, for Ezra, who was his contemporary, is always spoken of as the "restorer of the law." It is legitimate to conclude that by the "books concerning kings and prophets" were meant the historical and prophetical books (or some of them at least), which constitute the second division of the Canon (see § 3); while "those of David, and epistles of kings concerning holy gifts," refer to the Psalms, and such documents as the decrees of the Persian kings relating to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem,[1] in fact to the third division of the Canon, or some undefined part of it.

2. The reference in the passage to Judas Maccabaeus, is taken by some to indicate the writer's belief that the last additions were made to the Canon in the time of Judas.

§ 9. Another of the books included in the Septuagint collection is the **Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach**, otherwise known as the book of **Ecclesiasticus**. The book was originally composed in Hebrew, and was translated into Greek by the **grandson** of the author, who has prefixed to it a **prologue** or preface. The reference which he therein gives to the date is generally understood to imply that he himself came into Egypt in the year B.C. **132**. This would give the date of his grandfather somewhere about B.C. **200**, certainly not later than 180, for the book has no reference

[1] See, *e.g.*, Ezra i. 1-4; iv. 17-22; vi. 3-12; vii. 11-28.

to the Maccabean wars (from 175 onwards). The book itself gives no direct information on the history of the Canon, but it leaves no doubt as to the high value set by the author on the canonical books. In various terms he magnifies "the Law," using the expression apparently (as we find it also used in the New Testament)[1] for Scripture generally; and in one passage (ch. xlix. 10), where he is enumerating the great men of former times, he speaks of the "twelve prophets" (showing that he was thinking of the books). The testimony, however, of the grandson and editor is more precise. He tells us that his grandfather was familiar with the "law and the prophets and the other books which follow them," or, as he again describes them, "the other books of the fathers," or "the rest of the books." Moreover, in speaking of his own work as a translation, he tells us that "the law itself and the prophecies and the rest of the books, have no small difference uttered in the original"; plainly indicating that the books referred to already existed in a well-known Greek translation. Though these passages do not give us precise information as to the compass of the Canon, and particularly of the third division of it, they make it clear that, at the date of ben Sirach himself, a number of canonical books, reckoned in three classes, were well known and universally accepted, and that, in the time of the editor, these books existed in a well-known Greek translation. The testimony is all the more valuable because the book in which it occurs was originally written in Hebrew; and the author of it,

[1] See John x. 34; xii. 34; xv. 25; 1 Cor. xiv. 21, and the marginal references.

while almost claiming for himself the same inspiration as prophets possessed (ch. xxiv. 33), sets his own work below the level of canonical Scripture; and, though the book has found a place in the LXX. Version, the translator himself distinguishes between it and the Sacred Writings.

1. It may be, as many think, that the general terms in which the third division of the Canon is spoken of, give an indication that the compass of that division was not then finally fixed. But it is to be remembered, on the other side, that the third division is described in the same general way at a much later time when it was certainly complete,—as, *e.g.*, in the New Testament; and that no more precise designation of it as a whole has ever been employed than that of "Writings" or Hagiographa.

CHAPTER IV

GRADUAL FORMATION OF THE CANON

§ 10. WHEN we attempt to reach an earlier time, precise historical notices fail us. The **Jewish tradition**, which passed over into the Christian Church, that the **Canon** was **completed** by **Ezra**, is found first in the apocryphal **fourth book of Esdras**, which belongs to the first century of the Christian era; and, apart from its legendary character, there are various considerations which tend to show that, though there is a kernel of truth in it, it simply expressed the desire of a later time to explain the existence of what by that time was a thing of high antiquity. Thus, *e.g.*, we have the facts (*a*) that the books of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** .re themselves in the collection; (*b*) that the book f **Chronicles** contains genealogies that come down to a much later time, not to speak of other books in the third division which also contain indications of a later date. Moreover (*c*) the fact that the **Samaritans** possess only the Pentateuch would seem to indicate that at the time of their final separation from the Jews this was the only accepted Canon; and (*d*) the **tripartite division** can only be

satisfactorily explained on the supposition of a gradual collection and a canonising by repeated stages.

1. From the legendary account we can extract at least the fact that by the writer's time *twenty-four* books formed the Canon; and the ascription of the collection to Ezra is testimony to the well-established fact that he had a most important share in the work.

§ 11. It is evident that the collection of a certain number of books into a Canon must have been made on some principle. The collection is not a fortuitous one, nor can it be a mere selection of works, say, as the best specimens of the nation's literature. It could not have been the simple matter of date that determined the right of certain books to a place in the collection; for they are of very different ages, some of them belonging to a time very near to that at which we have evidence of a canonical collection, while, as we have seen, other books, though valuable, were excluded. The writings have this in common that they are religious books, and we gather from the earliest references to the collection that it was of a national character. The later Jews distinguished three grades of inspiration as determining the three divisions of the Canon. This was, no doubt, an afterthought, but it points to the fact that all the books were regarded as possessing a divine authority. It is more natural to suppose that it was because individual books were already in high esteem that they were formed into a collection, than that their collection invested them with authority. We are led, therefore, to inquire whether we have any evidence of such a high

regard being paid to separate books before there was a formal canonical collection.

§ 12. In the canonical books themselves there are proofs that certain **writings**, or collections of writings, existed, and were of peculiar esteem, before there was such a formal collection of books as we understand by a **Canon**. Thus (1) we are told in various places of the Pentateuch that collections of laws and other matters were written down at certain times and carefully preserved.[1] (2) Not only in the Pentateuch (*e.g.* in Lev. x. 11; Deut. xvii. 9), but throughout the prophets, we are informed that it was the duty of the priests to teach the people the law; and though there may be doubts as to the compass of the Law referred to, or though it may be regarded as having been transmitted orally, the duty laid upon the priests implies that the thing to be explained was fixed and authoritative. (3) We gather from the book of Proverbs (xxv. 1) that at the court of King Hezekiah there were some "men" employed in sifting and collecting proverbial literature. (4) The prophets, or their pupils for them, wrote down certain of their productions; and the way in which these productions are spoken of indicates that they were regarded not as private, irresponsible musings, but writings with a public, national, and religious reference. (5) In the 18th year of the reign of King Josiah (see 2 Kings xxii., xxiii.) there was found in the Temple a law book, which—whatever it may have been—was at once recognised by king, priests, prophets, and people as authoritative and ancient. (6) We read not only

[1] Exod. xxxi. 18, xl. 20; Deut. xxxi. 26; cf. 1 Sam. x. 25.

of the writing of books, but of study of them at comparatively early times, and of certain pieces being specially set apart to be learned by the people.[1] (7) To which references may be added a consideration suggested by the literary features of the books themselves. In the analysis which has been made, particularly of the Pentateuch and the historical books, it appears that, while different sources or original compositions have been joined together, there has been a careful preservation, by those who made the combination, of even the smallest fragments of the originals; a proof that even the earliest documents were treated as precious national property, not to be handled lightly or disposed of at an editor's caprice. All these considerations go to prove that the Jewish people, from an early time, possessed a number of writings of a religious and national character, which they preserved with peculiar regard (see § 4).

§ 13. It is not, however, till the time immediately **after** the return from **the exile**, that we find such a formal setting apart of Scripture for public use and authoritative reference as is implied in canonising. The circumstances of the people demanded it, and the time was favourable. The books of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** show us that the task before these leaders was to consolidate the restored community on the basis of the old covenant, and to provide safeguards for the national preservation of the religion against internal corruption and heathen contamination. Accordingly, they appointed a formal and stated reading of the

1 See Deut. xxxi. 19 ff.; 2 Sam. i. 18; Ps. lxi. 1 (title); Isa. xxxiv. 16; Ps. i. and cxix. (*study* of the law).

Book of the Law in the audience of the people (Neh. viii.-x.), and carried out its requirements relating to social life and religious observances. From this time onwards, no doubt, the public reading of the sacred books formed part of public worship; and canonical Scripture, in the strict sense, was recognised. It is generally believed that the **first division** of the Canon was by that time substantially in the form in which we now have it; in other words, that the book of the Law spoken of in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah was the **Pentateuch.**

1. The prominence given at this crisis to the books of the Law should not be taken to imply that other books were not in existence, or not esteemed sacred. In the remarkable prayer contained in Neh. ix., while, as was natural in the circumstances, the first consolidation of the nation at the Exodus, and the first occupation of the land, are chiefly dwelt upon, not only is the period of the judges also clearly in view (vv. 26-28, which recall the very words of the book of Judges, ii. 11 ff.), but also the prophetic period (vv. 30, 31), and the whole history of the people "since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day" (v. 32). The primary need of the time was the order of a settled constitution, and this the Law provided.

2. The statement that is often made that, at this period, Israel was no longer a nation but a Church, is to be accepted with the reservation that, in everything except national independence, they were as much a nation as ever. They were permitted by the Persian power to administer their internal civil affairs; and their zeal to keep themselves pure from heathen contamination arose from national feeling. The prominence given to the Law, and not to prophetical or other books, is another indication that it was civil order and national

purity, rather than doctrine or peculiar beliefs that were first in their regard.

§ 14. The enlarged experience and growing necessities of the restored community no doubt furnish the explanation of the **enlargement of the Canon** that subsequently took place. The longer they remained without national independence, the more they would reverence their sacred books which were the record of their past national history, and expressed the national religious hopes. As the prophets, by the living voice, had reminded their hearers of the great past, and pointed forward to a greater future, so the **prophetical books** would foster the best feelings of later times, and take their place by the side of the law as authoritative symbols of the national faith and hope. At what precise time the custom originated of reading a portion of the prophetical Scriptures in public worship cannot, perhaps, be determined. But we have seen that the earliest notices we possess refer to the **law and the prophets** together. It must have been some time after the date of Malachi, who is the latest of the prophets, and when the conviction had been formed that no more books of this class were to be written, that the prophetical collection was regarded as finally closed. But by the time of ben Sirach (§ 9) it would seem the collection was of long standing, and by the time of his editor it had also been translated into Greek. As, however, we have no record of a formal act by which it was done, we cannot fix the exact date of the incorporation of the prophets into the Canon.

1. The tradition contained in the letter prefixed to the second book of Maccabees (§ 8), ascribing to Nehemiah

the collecting of "the books concerning the kings and prophets," is interesting here as indicating the existence of at least some of both classes of the books of this division of the Canon, and a high regard for them at the very time that the Law was made the more prominent Scripture. It may be added that if, as critics generally believe, the book of Joshua originally was joined to the Pentateuch, it must have been regarded as equally authoritative, though, for practical purposes, it was disjoined from the books of the Law. And the references in the book of Nehemiah, not only to the time of the Conquest, but to that of the judges (§13, 1), show how the historical books generally received at that time particular attention.

§ 15. Similarly, we have only general indications to guide us in an attempt to determine when the **third division** of books was added, and the **final closing of the Canon** took place. The indications point to a gradual process, but do not warrant us in fixing a particular time for its termination. It is most probable that the Psalms, or some of them, were used in public worship from the earliest period after the return from the exile; and we have seen that to Nehemiah is ascribed the collection of "the things of David" (§ 8). Then, again, we have in ben Sirach (§ 9) those references to the "other books" which were held in veneration along with the law and the prophets. The "five rolls" (§ 3) came to be set apart for public reading on five great festivals; and the Talmud speaks of a solemn reading of some of the books contained in the third division in the presence of the high priest on the night before the great Day of Atonement. The time of the final completion of the Canon must manifestly have been

sometime later than the date of the composition of the most recent book in the collection, and when it was believed that no more books worthy to be included in it were forthcoming. No doubt there is room for difference of opinion as to where such a limit is to be fixed; but there seems no doubt, in view of the statements of the New Testament and Josephus (§§ 5, 6), that in the first century of our era the Canon was accepted as long closed, though we have no record of any formal act by which it was done. The gradual collection and final completion of the Canon not only furnish the true explanation of its threefold division, but enhance also the value of the whole, by exhibiting the care with which the books were preserved, and the deliberation with which they were set apart as authoritative Scripture.

1. The Talmud records certain discussions that went on as late as about A.D. 120 regarding the authority of certain books of the third division, and this has led some to place the completion of the Canon as far down as even the second century A.D. The tenor of these discussions, however, shows that they arose out of varieties of opinion as to the contents of some of the books, or difficulties in reconciling them with other books, in the Canon, such as have been also expressed by Christian writers in regard to some of the New Testament books. At most, they indicate doubts on the part of some as to whether certain books *ought* to be in the Canon, but no doubt of the fact that they *were* already there.

2. The "disputed" books which are found in the Canon, though their claims may have been contested, must not be confounded with the **Apocrypha** of the Old Testament, which were never in the Palestinian Canon at all. The latter were included, along with the Greek translations of the canonical books, in the Alex-

andrian Collection of the Septuagint; and, since that version became the "Bible" of Greek-speaking Christians, who were unacquainted with Hebrew, all the books in the Collection came to be quoted and regarded as "Scripture." The same thing naturally took place with other Christian Versions based upon the Septuagint; till, finally, the Council of Trent, in A.D. 1546, declared that all the books in the Latin Vulgate were equally inspired, and thus the Apocrypha are included in the Roman Catholic Bible. Jerome, however, had drawn a distinction between canonical and apocryphal books, meaning by the latter term all ecclesiastical literature not included in the Hebrew Canon. The Reformed Churches also, though they often printed the Apocrypha at the end of the Old Testament, drew a distinction between them and the canonical books. The word *Apocrypha* means *hidden* (things), and was first of all applied to mystical writings, which could be understood only by the initiated. It was then used to denote books whose authorship was unknown, and then applied to spurious or fictitious, and finally to heretical, books. The additional books of the LXX. and Vulgate, to which, in the restricted sense, the name is usually applied, are: the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1st and 2nd Maccabees, and the Additions to Daniel and Esther. To these the Reformed Churches added 1st and 2nd Esdras, and the Prayer of Manasseh. It should be mentioned that, besides these, there is a considerable number of books belonging to about the same period, which would come under Jerome's description of ecclesiastical literature, although the name Apocrypha is not applied to them. The chief works in this class are: the 3rd and 4th books of the Maccabees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Jubilees, the Sibylline Oracles, etc. They are particularly interesting for the light they throw upon the religious ideas current among the Jews about the beginning of the Christian era.

CHAPTER V

TRANSMISSION OF THE CANON

§ 16. We have thus seen the manner in which the books were collected into the **Canon.** We have now to inquire (see § 2) what guarantee we have that the books now in our possession are the same as those thus collected, and in what manner they have been **transmitted** to us. A very interesting question arises at the outset, as to the appearance of the books at the time of their first collection. We know from old monuments that the **ancient** mode of **Hebrew writing** was different from that in which the Scriptures have been handed down; and as the Samaritans have preserved their Pentateuch in a character which is only a modification of the older Hebrew, we may conclude that the older mode of writing was in use at the time of their separation from the Jews. Therefore, such books as were written in this character must have been transcribed at some time into the "**square**" character in which they now all appear in the Hebrew Bible. This was the work of the **Scribes** whose activity must be dated from the time of Ezra, if not earlier, for he

is described as "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (Ezra vii. 6); and the Jewish tradition which ascribes to him the introduction of the square character, and the restoration of the Law, or even the rewriting of the whole of the Old Testament books, no doubt rests upon the basis of the undoubted fact that it was by his influence that an impulse was given in the restored community to a careful preservation and study of Scripture. With him and Nehemiah were associated a number of leading men in the nation (see Neh. viii. 4 ff.); and, since the attention to written Scripture increased from this time onwards, the work of the scribes in **preserving, copying,** and **handing on** the sacred books would assume a more technical and professional character. Books that were authoritative standards and used in public worship would be sought for in transcripts of guaranteed accuracy. And thus the Scribes, having their capabilities improved by exercise, would be stimulated to increased carefulness by the responsibility resting upon them. Their work is in a manner vouched for by the religious consciousness of their times.

1. Jewish tradition speaks of a "Great Synagogue" dating from the time of the captivity, to whom is ascribed in a special way the editing and handing down of the books. Under a great deal that is fanciful in the tradition, we must recognise two facts, that much care was bestowed on the books, and that the transmission of them must have been through hands specially trained and by persons publicly trusted and esteemed.

§ 17. The **books as first copied** and multiplied by the Scribes must have presented very much the

appearance of the rolls of the Law still in use in the Jewish synagogues. In these rolls the books are written in what is called **unpointed Hebrew**; *i.e.* only the consonants of the words are written, the vowels being supplied by the reader. Thus, for example, the words *David*, *Horeb* are simply written DVD, HRB; and the reader, guided by his knowledge of the language and by the context, pronounced the words with their appropriate vowels. Of course the ability to read a text of this kind with sufficient accuracy would be the ambition of learned men; and among a special class of such men the **tradition** would be maintained. So, when the Hebrew as a living language was passing away, these "masters of the tradition" became authorities for the correct pronunciation, and they devised a system of punctuation — the so-called vowel points—by which to represent the appropriate vowels. These points they wrote above or below the consonants, in such a way that the original text was untouched. Thus they would, *e.g.*, write D_aV_iD and H^oR_eB, thereby guiding the less learned to the reading, and perpetuating the tradition in a visible form, while retaining the original consonantal text entire and unchanged. The Hebrew word for *tradition* is Massōra, and so the text as it has been handed down with its vowel-signs is called the **Massoretic Text.** In addition to the vowel points there was also added, above or below the letters, a system of accents indicating the proper accentuation of the words, the manner in which they were to be conjoined or disjoined, and the style or tone in which the text was to be recited. The printed Hebrew

Bibles in use both among Jews and Christians are provided with all these points and accents, constituting what we may call the received text, and indicating with sufficient clearness the sense in which the Massoretes understood their Scriptures.

1. To show how skill is needed in reading the consonantal text, it may be mentioned that the letters DVD might also be pronounced so as to give the meaning of *love*, *pot*, etc., and HRB with the change of a vowel might be pronounced to mean *sword*.

2. Though the Jews use fully pointed texts for ordinary purposes, they still use only unpointed rolls of the Law for reading in the synagogue. The placing of the vowel points outside the text shows the scrupulous care that was taken in preserving the original form of the text. It will be perceived that scholars are able, by discarding or altering the vowel points, to observe different modes of reading the consonantal text.

§ 18. Though we have abundant evidence of the great care bestowed by the Massoretes on the text, we have **no manuscripts** which enable us to go behind them and **check the text** which they have handed down. In the case of the New Testament we have manuscripts which reach back to within three or four centuries of the time at which the original books must have been written. But in the case of the Old Testament, the Massoretic text itself was not completely equipped till about the seventh century A.D., and the oldest manuscripts which we possess are about two centuries later, and are all based upon the Massoretic text itself. We have, however, in the ancient **versions** or translations of the Hebrew books, most valuable means

of testing the fidelity with which the books were preserved in pre-Massoretic times. The **Septuagint** version, *e.g.*, which (as we have seen, § 7) was begun about B.C. 280, long before vowel signs or accents were employed, shows that the texts were read and understood practically in the sense in which the Massoretes have handed them down to us. There are, no doubt, variations in details, as might have been expected, such as would arise from the mistaking of one letter for another, the joining of a letter of one word to another so as to produce a different reading, or the reading of a word with different vowels; and, in some of the books, indications of the use of a partially divergent text. But when we take into account, as we are bound to do, the risks the books had to encounter in such a long period of transmission, we feel that it is not too much to say of these books, that "being immediately inspired by God," they have been "by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages."[1]

1. The "risks" referred to were partly *external*, arising out of the national troubles through which Israel passed at various periods, when there was danger of the sacred books being lost or destroyed; partly *internal*, arising from the neglect of religion on the one hand, and, on the other, the many hands through which the books had to pass, the liability to error attendant on everything human, and the possibility of the Greek translators not being in all respects thoroughly equipped for their important work.

2. One instance may suffice to explain how a "various reading" might come into a passage. In Gen. xlvii. 31 we read "Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head";

[1] Confession of Faith, chap. i. 8.

while in Heb. xi. 21, which refers to the incident, we read that he "worshipped [leaning] upon the top of his staff." In the unpointed Hebrew occurs the word MTH, which the Massoretic text reads M_iTT_aH a *bed*, while the Septuagint, which is quoted in Hebrews, made it read M_aTT_eH, a *staff*.

§ 19. Besides the Septuagint, there are other **ancient versions** of the Old Testament, going back to a time before the completion of the Massoretic text. There are, for instance, the Jewish **Targums**, or translations made into Aramaic, which was the spoken language after the decay of Hebrew. There is also the **Syriac** version made for the use of the Syrian Christians. And there are various **Latin** translations, the best known of which is the Vulgate, not to speak of other versions. From these, which were made either direct from the Hebrew or from the Septuagint, scholars are able to determine the sense in which the texts were read; and by their aid they can check the received text at doubtful points, and draw their conclusions as to what the original readings may have been. The Massoretic text, however, has had so long a history, has been so carefully handed down, and is in the main so thoroughly supported by the versions, that no complete text of the Old Testament has yet been brought forward to take its place; and even in the Revised Version, published as late as 1885, "the Revisers have thought it most prudent to adopt the Massoretic Text as the basis of their work, and to depart from it, as the Authorised Translators had done, only in exceptional cases."[1]

[1] Preface to the Revised Version.

PART II

THE BOOKS COMPOSING THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL VIEW OF THE BOOKS

§ 20. THE Old Testament may be regarded, as we have seen (§§ 1, 2), not merely as one whole book, but also as a **collection of books**; and if we look at it for a moment in this light, apart from the divisions and arrangement of the Canon (§ 3), we shall see that the "Divine Library" consists of literary productions belonging to very **different periods** and relating to very **various subjects.** In treating of their contents and characteristics, there would be many advantages in arranging them, if it were possible, in the **chronological order** in which they were composed. For we should thus have, as we have, *e.g.*, in the literature of our own country, a succession of literary periods corresponding to periods in the national history; and be able to trace the progress of literature and the growth of national thought and reflection side by side with the movements of national history.

To a certain extent and at some periods we can do this, but there are these great difficulties in the way of carrying out this mode of treatment: (*a*) The most of the books of the Old Testament are **anonymous**, and we are left to determine from themselves or from other books their authorship and date of composition. (*b*) The **language** in which the books are written exhibits such a permanency and **uniformity** that we are unable, on that ground, to mark out definite literary periods. (*c*) So also, although we can perceive an advance in the thoughts, and a broadening of the views of the Old Testament writers with the advance of time, there is a marked **permanency** and uniformity of those **fundamental conceptions** regarding God and Duty with which the Bible chiefly deals; and it is difficult to distinguish what is primitive or early from what is late. (*d*) There can be no doubt that, in several cases, **different parts** of the same book have come from different hands and belong to **different times** (the book of Psalms, *e.g.*, is a striking instance), so that a strict chronological arrangement would lead to the breaking up of many of the books into fragments.

1. It is difficult for an English reader to realise the fact that the language of Malachi is substantially the same as that of the earliest books. Though scholars find isolated marks of earlier or later date, there are not distinct literary periods, as such, before the exile. It is to be remembered that, in the course of transcription, changes of orthography may have been made in the MSS., just as changes have taken place in our printed Bibles. Such changes we may not be able to trace. The uniformity introduced by the vowel system of the Massoretes is more perceptible. We must, however, come to the con-

clusion that from a very early period the Hebrew language had attained a fixity, with which we have nothing in the early history of our language to compare.

§ 21. An **arrangement** of the books **according to their subjects** is also open to objection. The subjects of the books are most varied: history, law, prophecy, poetry, and philosophy or speculation of its kind. But these subjects are so presented that comparatively few of the books could be singled out as treating only of any one of them. We find history and law **closely interwoven** together; a hard and fast line cannot be drawn between poetry and prose; the prophetical books cannot be regarded apart from the history; and a whole series of the books that we call historical are named prophetical in the Hebrew Canon (§ 3). To a certain extent, indeed, the books *are* arranged in the Canon according to their subjects, for we find, *e.g.*, all the law books together, and all the prophetical books (if we exclude Daniel) in succession, while a series of books relating the history from the occupation of Canaan to the Babylonian captivity (Joshua to 2 Kings) follow one another. And, no doubt, it was out of regard to such connection, more than from a consideration of the date of their composition, that they were so arranged. Yet we have, in the third division of the Canon, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, and Esther, which must be classed as historical. Similarly, although we have the Psalms in one collection, there are to be found compositions of the same character in other books.

1. Our English Bible, following older versions, places Daniel with the prophetical books, and makes the books

of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah follow the book of Kings. Compare the two tables in § 3.

§ 22. Even if we could arrange the books according to their dates of composition or their contents, there would be one great practical disadvantage in the arrangement. At the foundation of the regard which we pay to the books as standards of faith, lies the fact that they give, in a **connected** order, a **record of the religious history** and life of the people to whom was committed in a special way a revelation of God's will, and who were specially guided for a great purpose, which in their own time was not made fully manifest. For the following of such a history, it is obvious that it is of secondary importance in what order the books were written, but that it is of the greatest advantage to **begin with** the books that relate to the **earliest times**, and to proceed according to the sequence of events. This is the way we study the history of our own country: we begin with a book that relates to the earlier period, even though that book may have been composed in our own day, provided only that the book is based on the best information to be had on the subject, and written as far as possible without partisan purpose. Now in the **Hebrew Canon** the books lie before us in **this order**, beginning with the creation and primeval history, and coming down (in 2 Kings) to the extinction of the Jewish independent nationality. And though there are historical books in the third division, they either traverse the same history (as the books of Chronicles), or relate to the period after the exile (as Ezra and

Nehemiah). The prophetical books, though all placed together, can in the main be assigned to their proper historical places; and the book of Daniel, referring to a late period, falls without inconvenience among the last books. The order of the Hebrew Canon has this other advantage, that it enables us to look at books in the groups in which they have been from ancient time arranged (such as the twelve minor Prophets, and the Five Rolls, § 3). We shall, therefore, take up the several books of the Old Testament in the order and in the groups in which they have been handed down in the Hebrew Canon (see § 3).

CHAPTER VII

THE PENTATEUCH AS A WHOLE

§ 23. THE **first five books** of the Bible were, from the earliest date at which we hear of them, spoken of collectively as the Law, the **Book of the Law**, or the Law of Moses.[1] The whole work, so named, must have been early arranged in the five parts in which it now appears, for it is so divided in the Septuagint version (§ 7). The word **Pentateuch** is of Greek origin, meaning the *five-fold book;* and the names by which we now denote the five separate books were first given in Greek to indicate their contents. If we turn over the pages of these books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, we shall see at a glance a **great variety of Contents.** The book of Genesis begins with the Creation and primeval times, and passes on to patriarchal life in the land of Canaan. In Exodus, we are told of the hard bondage of Israel in Egypt; their deliverance under Moses and Aaron; the giving of the Law at Sinai and the setting up of the Tabernacle. Leviticus is full of laws, referring, for the most part, to worship and ceremonial. Numbers tells of the wanderings in the desert, and Deuter-

[1] See Neh. viii. 1, 2, 8, 14; ix. 3, etc. Compare Malachi iv. 4.

onomy contains the farewell addresses of Moses to the people, as they were about to enter the promised land. The time covered by the Pentateuch thus extends from the Creation to the death of Moses.

1. The five-fold appearance has not arisen from a merely artificial division. Genesis forms a piece in itself, and so does Deuteronomy. Leviticus has one prevailing characteristic throughout; while the opening words of Exodus (Exod. i. 1-7), and the closing words of Numbers (Num. xxxvi. 13) indicate that each is to be regarded as complete in itself.

2. The Jews designate the Pentateuch the five-fifths of the Law, and at first they gave no distinctive names to the separate books, but simply indicated them by their opening words "In the beginning" (for Genesis), "These are the names" (for Exodus), and so on. At a later time they gave them Hebrew titles, such as "Book of the Creation," "Book of Damages," etc., to denote their contents.

§ 24. Under all this variety of contents, we recognise **two main elements** of which the Pentateuch is made up. (1) The first is **history.** The Pentateuch is not by any means a universal history, though it begins with the whole human race, and speaks of the countries over which the race spread. Nor does it even carry into detail many of the subjects which it takes up. Yet the main stream of narrative is never interrupted; and even when we lose sight of it for a time under other interests, it comes up again and flows on to the end. (2) The other element is **law,** and this feature is so prominent in the books, that it has given its name to the whole Pentateuch. One of the books (Leviticus) is entirely composed of laws, others (Exodus and Numbers) have laws mixed up with

the history, and another (Deuteronomy) has laws incorporated in long addresses. Even the book of Genesis, which is mainly narrative, places the law of marriage and the Sabbath in primeval times, gives regulations as to food in the time of Noah, and relates the institution of circumcision in the history of Abraham. The laws embodied in the Pentateuch relate to all relations of life; and it is to be observed that though all the laws on one subject are not always placed together, the whole of the legislation of the Old Testament is contained in these five books.

1. It is a remarkable fact that we do not read of the Israelite kings enacting laws. The isolated cases that occur are either so exceptional as to prove the rule (*e.g.* 1 Sam. xxx. 25), or represented by the sacred writers as irregular and sinful (1 Kings xii. 26-33). Nor do the prophets legislate. The so-called "programme" of Ezekiel (chaps. xl.-xlviii.) was not regarded by the Jews who re-organised the worship of the second Temple as a code to be acted upon (see below, § 59).

§ 25. Though we can distinguish these two elements running like two streams through the books, yet they combine to form one river; for there is **unity and plan** in the whole. The history is not intelligible without the laws, nor the laws apart from the history; for there is one aim kept steadily in view throughout, as we can see from the manner in which each succeeding book takes up the narrative of the preceding. From the opening chapters of Genesis, we might indeed expect that the books are to give us a history of the whole human race; but we perceive, as we read on, that the purpose is quite different. Nations

and families are enumerated, and then dismissed without further notice; the attention being made to concentrate upon **one family**—that of **Abraham**—with whose fortunes it is evidently the design of the book to concern itself. This family is represented as **set apart** in a peculiar manner from the beginning **for a great purpose**; and it is towards the fulfilment of that purpose that the Law comes in, as a means of separating the Israelites from other peoples, and educating them for the mission they are to execute in the world. It is plainly the nation of Israel that is in view throughout, and that nation as under special Divine training; and the Pentateuch exhibits the first stage of the history and the first steps of the training, up to the point when the people are ready to enter the land of Canaan, which had been assigned to them as their dwelling-place.

1. It will be noticed that the foreign nations that are mentioned, however briefly, in the early books, are peoples who became at a later time Israel's near neighbours (as Canaan, Edom, Moab, etc.), or who exercised a powerful influence on the national history (as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon).

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOOKS OF THE PENTATEUCH

§ 26. BEFORE considering the literary manner in which the Pentateuch is composed and estimating its importance as a part of the sacred history, we must look at the contents of the five books of which it is made up, and see how they exhibit the successive steps of the progress that is to be described.

GENESIS

The name given to this book is Greek, signifying *origin* or *genealogy*, and it conveniently designates the book which speaks of the origin of the world and of mankind, and exhibits the genealogy of the chosen race. The **contents** fall naturally into two great divisions: (1) **primeval history** (chaps. i.-xi.), beginning with the origin of all things at the hand of God. Here we are told of the entrance of sin, and the spread of evil, leading to the judgment of the Flood. Then there is a new expansion of the race in the family of Noah, and a new growth of evil, culminating in the judgment of Babel; and through the genealogy of Shem the line is traced

down to Terah, the father of Abraham, with whom begins (2) the **patriarchal history**, extending from chap. xii. to the end. In this division the connecting bond is the promise to Abraham and the covenant based upon it, the unfolding of which is exhibited in the histories of Isaac and Jacob, and the rise of the twelve tribes. This sketch of the contents already indicates the **plan** of the book, and a closer examination shows how the plan is **wrought out.** It becomes apparent that the details of the opening chapters are not fragments of folk-lore, put down to satisfy curiosity, but that they are designed to form an introduction to the history which is to follow, by exhibiting the world and all the movements of mankind as under the guidance of the one God, and even man's sin as controlled by Him for the furtherance of one great end. The gradual narrowing of the view from all the races of mankind to the family of Abraham, shows how this end is to be secured; and the increasing clearness of the promise, and the greater definiteness of the calling of the chosen race, are observable from step to step. The book begins with God; and at its close, when Jacob and his family go down to Egypt, we are conscious that a great Divine purpose is bound up in their history. The **keynote** of the whole is *promise.* See xii. 1-3, 7; xiii. 15; xv. 18; xvii. 8. Also, in the earlier part, iii. 15; viii. 21, 22; ix. 11-17.

1. The expression "these are the generations" (i.e. *genealogies*), occurs ten (or, strictly speaking, eleven) times in the book, serving to connect the various steps in the history, and indicating also how the interest is concentrated from step to step. The passages are :—

Chap.	ii.	4.	Heavens and earth.	Chap. xi.	27. Terah.
	v.	1.	Adam.	xxv.	12. Ishmael.
	vi.	9.	Noah.	xxv.	19. Isaac.
	x.	1.	Sons of Noah.	xxxvi.	1, 9. Esau.
	xi.	10.	Shem.	xxxvii.	2. Jacob.

EXODUS

§ 27. The **name** of this book is also Greek and indicates the most striking event recorded in it—the *departure* of Israel from Egypt. In **form** and **contents** the book differs remarkably from Genesis; as it deals no longer with a family but with a people, and, instead of a continuous narrative, we have now a combination of history and law. Yet a thread of narrative runs through the whole, by the aid of which we can mark these two great **divisions** according to the stages of the history:—

(*a*) The departure from Egypt (chaps. i.-xviii.)

(*b*) The giving of the Law at Sinai (xix.-xl.)

And though the literary arrangement of the book does not seem to be studied, the **aim** is never once lost sight of. It is the God of the patriarchs that interposes for His people, and the Law is based on the Covenant made with Abraham.

The **keynote** of the first part is given in vi. 1-8, that of the second in xix. 1-6.

1. In the *first part* the main points are: the oppression of the Israelites, the birth, early life, and appointment of Moses (i.-iv.); the struggle with Pharaoh and the infliction of the plagues (v.-x.), with the tenth and last of which are connected the institution of the Passover, and the Sanctification of the first-born (xi.-xiii. 16); the passage of the Red Sea and the journey to Elim (xiii. 17-xv. 27); the giving of the manna (xvi.); the victory over Amalek (xvii.); and the visit of Jethro to Moses (xviii.)

In the *second part*, the condition of the covenant being laid down and accepted by the people, the law is declared and solemnly ratified over the "book of the Covenant" (xix. 1-xxiv. 8); Moses, during his stay of forty days in the Mount, receives the Tables of Stone and instructions for the Tabernacle (xxiv. 9-xxxi. 18); he intercedes for the people who had, in his absence, made the Golden Calf; God reveals Himself as the Merciful and Righteous One, and renews the Table and Covenant (xxxii.-xxxiv.); and the preparation and setting up of the Tabernacle are fully described (xxxv.-xl.)

2. It will be observed that the narrative does not begin where Genesis stopped, but a very long **interval is passed over** without record (compare Gen. xv. 13; Exod. xii. 40), for the family of Jacob is now a numerous nation. The date to which the history is brought down at the end of the book is the first day of the first month of the second year from the Exodus (see xvi. 1; xix. 1; xl. 2, 17).

LEVITICUS

§ 28. The **name** (derived from the Greek) which is applied to this book has reference to the Levitical, or rather priestly regulations of which the book is chiefly composed. The Levites are only once incidentally mentioned (xxv. 32, 33); but the **priests** are continually referred to; and the laws of this book, which are mostly of a ceremonial character, are such as would form a **handbook** to them in the performance of their functions. The principle laid down in Exodus (xix. 1-6) that Israel was to be "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation," is here carried out into detail. The **keynote** of the whole is "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2).

1. The **contents** may be thus arranged :—

(*a*) The Laws of Offerings, viz. the Burnt Offering (i.), the Meal[1] Offering (ii.), the Peace Offering (iii.), the Sin Offering (iv.-v. 13), the Trespass Offering (v. 14-vii.)

(*b*) The consecration of Aaron and his sons, and the punishment of Nadab and Abihu (viii.-x.)

(*c*) Laws relating to foods (xi.), defilement (xii.-xv.), the Day of Atonement (xvi.)

(*d*) A collection of laws on various subjects, often described as the "Law of Holiness" (xvii.-xxvi.)

(*e*) An appendix on vows, tithes, and things devoted (xxvii.)

2. As to the **arrangement**, it is noticeable that while a definite order is observed in some sections, as in chaps. i.-vii., and a recurring expression or dominating idea gives unity to others (as "be ye holy" in xvii.-xxvi.), laws relating to the same or similar subjects are not always placed together; and even the same laws are found repeated in different parts of the book. The impression made by the whole is that of a collection of smaller collections, or of a collection added to from time to time.

3. If we compare Exod. xl. 17 with Num. x. 11, it will appear that the whole **period** between the setting up of the Tabernacle and the departure from Sinai was only a month and twenty days. This would make it probable that, just as Moses carried out in detail the arrangements of the Tabernacle after the pattern that was shown him in the Mount (Exod. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 8), so we have here in detail the regulations for the worship and life of the people, which he was instructed to give,—set down as they were called forth, and preserved in this fragmentary form.

NUMBERS

§ 29. The **name** of this book, which is trans-

[1] So the R.V. rightly renders the word denoting the *bloodless* offering, which in the A.V. was translated *meat offering*.

lated from the Greek, was applied with reference to the two *numberings* of the people which it relates,—at Sinai (i.) and in the plains of Moab (xxvi.) Whereas Leviticus is entirely made up of laws, this book, like Exodus, is in **contents** partly historical and partly legislative; but it is closely connected with Leviticus and forms its natural continuation. It covers a **long period of time**; for, if we deduct the fourteen months spent on the journey from Egypt and in the stay at Sinai (see § 27, 2, and § 28, 3), the whole of the remaining portion of the forty years of the wilderness life is embraced in it. We may, accordingly, divide the book into three sections:—

(*a*) At Sinai (as in Leviticus), chaps. i.-x. 10.
(*b*) From Sinai to Moab, x. 11-xxii. 1.
(*c*) In the plains of Moab, xxii. 2-xxxvi.

1. In the *first section*, which begins exactly a month after the setting up of the Tabernacle (comp. i. 1 with Exod. xl. 17), we have an account of the numbering of the tribes, with the order in which they were to march and encamp, and also the arrangements for the service of the Levites (i.-iv.); followed by regulations for lepers, restitution for trespass, the water of jealousy, Nazirites, and the form for the blessing of the people (v., vi.) We have then an account of what took place at the dedication of the Tabernacle (vii., viii.), of the observance of the Passover (ix.), and of the guidance of the people by the pillar of cloud and the silver trumpets (ix., x.)

The *second section* covers the period from the twentieth day of the second month of the second year to the fortieth year of the Exodus. It contains, not a connected history but a series of incidents in the wilderness life, as the murmurings (xi.-xiv.), the revolt and punishment of Korah and his company (xvi., xvii.), with various laws interspersed (in chaps. xv., xviii., xix.); ending with an

account of the journey from Kadesh round Edom into the plains of Moab, in the course of which we have the episodes of the unbelief of Moses and Aaron at Meribah, and the sending of the fiery serpents (xx., xxi.)

The *third section* (whose scene is in the plains of Moab), relates the story of Balaam (xxii. 2-xxiv. 25), the idolatry at Shittim (xxv.), the numbering of the people (xxvi.), the appointment of Joshua (xxvii. 12-23), and regulations for the territory of the eastern tribes, for the division of the whole land, and for the setting apart of cities of the Levites and cities of refuge (xxxii.-xxxv.) Here again we have, interspersed, a number of laws on various subjects (xxvii. 1-11; xxviii.-xxx.; xxxiii. 50-56; xxxvi.), besides a chapter on the encounter with the Midianites (xxxi.), and a list of the wilderness stations (xxxiii. 1-49).

DEUTERONOMY

§ 30. The **name** given to this book signifies *repetition of the law*, being, in English form, the Greek word which was employed as a translation of the expression "copy (i.e. *duplicate*) of this law," in chap. xvii. 18. It should not, however, be taken to imply that in this book we have merely a repetition of laws already given in preceding books. The **scene** of the book is in the plains of Moab, as at the close of Numbers; and if we compare chap. i. 3 with Josh. iv. 19, and deduct 30 days for the mourning after the death of Moses (Deut. xxxiv. 8), it will appear that only 40 days are left for the events related in this book. The book is unlike any of those that precede it; for, though it contains a certain amount of legislation, the connecting link is not history but a series of **addresses.** Instead of the familiar expression

"The Lord spake unto Moses," it is now Moses who speaks to the assembled people. Deuteronomy rests upon the preceding books, however, not only by recalling or taking for granted the events which they record, but by emphasising what is the **key-note** of the whole,—God's choice of Israel to be a holy people to Himself (see chaps. vii. 6-8 ; x. 15).

1. The *first address* (i.-iv. 40) sets forth God's care in the past as a motive for obedience to His Laws.

The *second address* forms the greater part of the book, extending to the end of chap. xxvi. ; and chap. iv. 44 seems to form a sort of introduction to it. The first part of this address (to the end of chap. xi.) contains the Decalogue, with a recital of the circumstances under which the covenant was made at Horeb. The second part (from chap. xii.) contains the "statutes and judgements" to be observed in the promised land.

A *third address* begins at chap. xxvii., providing for the writing of the law on plastered stones on Mount Ebal, and the solemn taking of the covenant. In chap. xxviii. we have the blessing and the curse which are to follow the keeping or the breaking of the covenant, and in the next two chapters an exhortation to its faithful observance. Chap. xxxi. relates the commission to Joshua, the delivery of the Law to the priests and elders with a charge to read it once in seven years to the assembled people. We have then the "Song of Moses" (xxxii.), recounting all God's deeds for His people, which is to be handed down as a witness to succeeding generations ; followed by the "blessing" of Moses—also in poetical form (xxxiii.) ; and a brief chapter, in exalted terms, relating how the law-giver viewed the land he was not to enter, and "died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord" (xxxiv.)

CHAPTER IX

COMPOSITION OF THE PENTATEUCH

§ 31. THE five books composing the Pentateuch are usually designated the **books of Moses**, as in our English Bibles, although they are not so named in the original. The **reasons for this** are obvious: (*a*) It was through him that the *Law* was given, which forms the most prominent part of the contents of the books. (*b*) He was the greatest figure in the *history* at the time when Israel became a nation, and lived through the events which form a great part of the record; and (*c*) he is explicitly said to have *written* down certain things recorded in the books. It was, therefore, a natural thing to ascribe to one who had such an influence on law and history, the writing of this book which contains both history and law.

1. The Pentateuch, like the great majority of the books of the Old Testament, is of anonymous composition. The passages in which Moses is distinctly said to have written something are: Exod. xvii. 14; xxiv. 4, 7; xxxiv. 27; Num. xxxiii. 1, 2; Deut. xxxi. 9-11, 22, 24-26. Compare Josh. i. 7, 8; viii. 31, 34; xxiii. 6; xxiv. 26.

2. It cannot now be denied that the art of writing was practised in the time of Moses, and that he may have written all that is ascribed to him. Not only was literary composition common in Egypt before his day, but recent discoveries have proved that in Palestine also the art of writing (though in a different character from the Hebrew) was carried on before the Exodus. The Old Testament itself gives no hint of the time at which writing was introduced among the Hebrews. There is no mention of it in the story of the purchase of the field of Ephron by Abraham (Gen. xxiii.), where we would expect it if it had been known; but from the time of Moses onwards it is spoken of as a matter of course. See the following passages: Jud. viii. 14 *marg.*; 2 Sam. viii. 16, 17; xi. 14, 15; xx. 24, 25. Compare also Isaiah viii. 1; x. 19; xxix. 11, 12.

3. The "tradition" of the Jews which ascribes to Moses the writing of the Pentateuch (except the closing verses of Deuteronomy) appears for the first time at so late a date that reliance cannot be placed upon it. It is conjoined with traditions as to the composition of the other books which are manifestly the result of conjecture.

§ 32. From the time, however, that a closer study was made of the language and literary form of the Pentateuch, the conviction grew that the whole could not have come, in its existing form, from the hand of Moses. The chief **arguments against the Mosaic authorship** are these: (*a*) There are certainly portions which he *could not have written* (see 1 below). (*b*) Though there is a plan in the whole, the *character* and *arrangement* of the parts do not favour the idea of unity of authorship (see 2 below). (*c*) Different parts exhibit different literary *styles* (see 3 below). (*d*) Other historical books of the Old Testament show that the authors freely *incorporated* the composition of others in

their works, and there is a presumption that the Pentateuch was composed in the same manner (see 4 below).

1 (Under *a*). The account of Moses' death (Deut. xxxiv.) gives no indication that it was written by another hand than that which composed the rest of the book (compare Deut. xxxiii. 1, "before his death"). And there are many other passages which can only be ascribed to him by a very forced explanation. See, *e.g.*, Gen. xii. 6; xiii. 7; xxxvi. 31; Exod. xvi. 35 (compare Josh. v. 12); Levit. xviii. 24-28; Num. xv. 32-36; Deut. ii. 12; iii. 11, 14 (compare Jud. x. 3, 4).

2 (Under *b*). There are two passages, *e.g.*, referring to the Creation: Gen. i. 1-ii. 4, and Gen. ii. 4-25; but the second has not the appearance of being simply an additional description by the person who wrote the first. So in the account of the Flood there seem to be two narratives combined (compare Gen. vi. 14 to end, with vii. 1 ff.) For other *repeated* accounts, varying in details, compare Gen. xxviii. 19 with xxxv. 9-15; Gen. xxxv. 10 with xxxii. 28; Gen. xxvi. 34 and xxviii. 9 with xxxvi. 2-5. And for the laws, compare Exod. xxiii. 17-19 with xxxiv. 23-26; and Exod. xxii. 21 with xxiii. 9. As to *arrangement* of parts, note how the section beginning at Exod. vi. 2 takes no account of the section preceding it (iii.-v.); and compare Exod. vi. 30 with iv. 10, etc.

3 (Under *c*). The English reader is in a position to observe one remarkable peculiarity of style. In the opening portion of Genesis (Gen. i. 1-ii. 3) the Creator is called God (which is the translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*); in chap. iv. He is called the LORD (which is the translation of Jehovah); whereas from chap. ii. 4 to iii. 24 we find the two names the LORD God combined. It will also be observed that in the account of the Flood (Gen. vi.-viii.) sometimes the one name is used, and sometimes the other. There are other variations of style, not so apparent to the English reader, which characterise different portions, and these are found

for the most part to run in the several passages that vary in the use of the Divine name.

4. (Under *d*). By a comparison of the books of Chronicles (which are late) with those of Kings, we find that a later writer had no hesitation in using, without mentioning the fact, the accounts or materials of former writers. Compare 2 Chron. i. 3-13 with 1 Kings iii. 4-15; 2 Chron. ii. 1-18 with 1 Kings v. 1-18; 2 Chron. iii. with 1 Kings vi.; 2 Chron. vii. 11-viii. 18 with 1 Kings ix. Also compare 2 Chron. xxii. 10-xxiii. 21 with 2 Kings xi.; and 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8-28 with 2 Kings xxii. An examination of the books succeeding the Pentateuch leads to the conclusion that they all more or less did the same. And the Pentateuch itself contains pieces which seem to have a separate origin,—incorporated in its pages (see Exod. xv. 1 ff., Num. xxi. 14-15, 17-18, 27).

§ 33. Such considerations as have just been mentioned have led to the conclusion, which is now generally accepted, that the Pentateuch is of **composite character.** That is to say, instead of each book having been written as an original composition by itself, there are found to be, running through the books, certain component parts, distinguishable by certain characteristics, and capable of being, to a certain extent, read by themselves; and all these have been so arranged and united as to form the existing Pentateuch. But as to the original writers of the several parts, the manner in which they were preserved, and the time and mode of their union, it is found possible to hold very different opinions.

1. The recurring "genealogies" which serve to connect the various steps in the narrative of Genesis, have been already referred to (§ 26, 1). The passages so introduced can be collected into a fairly continuous series;

and it will be found that the pieces written in that style, besides their fondness for dates and precision in numbers, show also a delight in tracing, to their source, religious institutions, such as the law of the Sabbath (Gen. ii. 1-3), the rite of circumcision (xvii. 10, 11), the prohibition of blood (ix. 4). Hence these parts are often spoken of as *priestly* in their character, and with them are classed the majority of the laws in Leviticus, and also those in Exodus and Numbers which are of a ceremonial or priestly kind. In other parts, again, the style is more diffuse and flowing, and characterised by the use of expressions and modes of thought which have led modern writers to speak of them as *prophetic*. The style of Deuteronomy, again, is, for the most part, hortatory and practical (see § 30, 2).

2. It is to be remembered that the narrative of Genesis closes at a date about 400 years before Moses. But though the materials of that book have all the appearance of having been carefully preserved and put together in the common method of Hebrew writers, we have no information as to how they were preserved or who put them together. Genesis says nothing of its own authorship.

3. Opinions differ widely as to the respective dates of various parts of the Pentateuch, and the manner in which they were brought together. Into these questions it is impossible here to enter. The features of the language, which point to differences of source, do not indicate the relative dates; and, for all that we know, portions that have different literary characteristics may belong to the same or nearly the same periods. Other grounds, on which attempts have been made to determine the dates, are so debatable that the conclusions are very uncertain; and there is a tendency to multiply sources unnecessarily, and to define their relations with a precision that cannot be accepted with any degree of confidence. In particular, the methods generally employed by those who advocate a very late date of large parts of the Pentateuch, are open to the objections, that they underrate the literary

attainments and religious standing of earlier times, or undervalue the insight and guidance possessed by the sacred writers, or even do violence to the documents, by attributing to the authors a mode of writing history which seems artificial, and inconsistent with the manifest honesty and simplicity of purpose which they display. See also § 91, 5.

4. It is not possible to frame a systematic **chronology of the Pentateuch.** The numbers given in the early chapters of Genesis differ in the Septuagint version and in the Samaritan Pentateuch from those of the Hebrew text and also from one another; thus:—

	Heb.	LXX.	Sam.
Years from Adam to the Flood	1656	2242	1307
From the Flood to Terah's 70th year	292	1072	942
	1948	3314	2249

As to the period of Abram, the foreign names mentioned in Gen. xiv. suggest a comparison with names occurring in ancient monuments; but they are not yet sufficiently identified. His date is usually placed about B.C. 2000. It is now very generally believed that the Pharaoh of the oppression was Ramses II. of the 19th dynasty, who reigned sixty-seven years, and is known from Egyptian monuments to have erected extensive works such as are mentioned in Exodus i. 11. The Pharaoh of the Exodus would, in that case, be Menephtah II., who came to the throne about B.C. 1325. See below § 35 and footnote.

CHAPTER X

THE PENTATEUCH AS A PART OF THE BIBLE

§ 34. THE **value of the Pentateuch** as a part of the Bible does not depend upon our knowledge of its authorship and mode of composition, but on its truthfulness as a historical document and on the place it occupies in connection with the whole Divine plan of revelation; and in regard to these it may be tested in various ways. In the *first* place, **looked at by itself,** it exhibits: (*a*) the greatest **care** in the preservation of the earliest national records and traditions; (*b*) thorough **honesty** in recording events, without exaggeration of virtues or palliation of sins; and (*c*) a pervading high **religious tone,** in contrast with the mythical early histories of other nations. The whole gives us the impression of a people under a special religious guidance, and of an impartial writing of history under the serious consciousness of such guidance.

1. The preservation of separate documents and accounts not only is an evidence of pious care, but enhances the credibility of the whole by exhibiting the testimony of various witnesses. The English reader is quite competent to judge whether the different sources, however they may be multiplied, are in material points

inconsistent with one another. Like the four Gospels in the New Testament, they present the same truth from different sides; and they exhibit a wonderful unity of purpose and identity of spiritual position.

2. It is to be remembered that the greater number of the Old Testament books are anonymous, and therefore their value is to be tested by considerations such as those mentioned in this chapter.

§ 35. In the *second* place, the Pentateuch may be **looked at in the light of modern discovery,** and its statements brought face to face with ascertained facts in history, archæology, and science. At the present day we have much fuller knowledge than was possessed at a comparatively recent time in regard to (*a*) the **topography** of the lands mentioned in the Bible; (*b*) the **history** of early times, and (*c*) the **origin of the** visible **universe.** And it may be affirmed that the progress of discovery, so far from tending to discredit the Bible writers, has often confirmed their statements in a most remarkable manner.[1]

1. The topography of the Holy Land, of Egypt, and of the Desert of Sinai, has been very specially examined in connection with the sacred writings, and at every step of the examination the accuracy and fidelity of the record have been more clearly exhibited.

2. The monuments of Egypt and Assyria have not only added greatly to our knowledge of early times, but have confirmed the scanty details contained in the Pentateuch. In our own day there have been discovered monuments illustrating, in a remarkable way, the statements of Gen. xiv., a chapter so unlike in its literary features to

[1] For particulars on this subject, see *Recent Explorations in Bible Lands*, by the Rev. Thomas Nicol, D.D., and *Light from Eastern Lands*, by the Rev. A. Williamson.

the other portions of the book, that some daring critics pronounced it entirely legendary.

3. Geology and Astronomy have enlarged our ideas as to the formation of the earth and the solar system. And though the book of Genesis was not written to teach science, and would have been unintelligible to its first readers if it had spoken in scientific terms, yet its statements agree with the ascertained facts of science in a way with which the cosmogonies of ancient nations have nothing to compare. If the Hebrew writers have thus preserved so pure an account of the manner in which God formed the material world, we may give all the more credence to them when they speak of God's dealings with man in history, which is their main theme.

§ 36. *Thirdly*, the Pentateuch may be looked at **in the light of other Scriptures**; and it will be found that all the succeeding books of the Old Testament proceed on these two assumptions: (*a*) That the early **history** of the chosen people was such as the Pentateuch describes; and (*b*) that from the time of Moses they had **laws** and ordinances such as the Pentateuch contains. So (*c*) the New Testament not only assumes the truth of the history contained in these books, but rests upon it as the basis of the revelation **completed in the Gospel.**

1. In estimating the testimony to the Pentateuch given by the succeeding books, two things are to be borne in mind: (*a*) That books must have been few in those early times, and teaching mostly oral. We are, therefore, to look not so much for the quotation of the precise words of one book in another, as for the facts which are assumed as well known. Brief references sometimes imply whole periods of history (see 1 Kings xviii. 36; Hos. ix. 10; xi. 1; xii. 3-5, 9, 12, 13; Amos ii. 9-11; iii. 1, 2; v. 25; ix. 7, etc.) (*b*) Large parts of the Pentateuch

as the ordinances for worship and ceremony, are of such a character that we need not be greatly surprised if prophets and prophetic men, who wrote the succeeding books, do not refer to them. We know that worship was carried on and ceremonies observed, but the regulations for these things would be the concern chiefly of the priests. Many things must have been of daily occurrence, though we have no express mention of them. When the prophet Ezekiel, in the time of the captivity, gives a description of what was to be the ritual of the restored Temple (Ezek. xl.-xlvi.), his language would have been unintelligible unless his readers had been familiarised by usage with the things described; and yet we hear little of them in the antecedent history.

2. The value of the opening chapters of Genesis, which refer to primeval times, is to be estimated not so much by the literary form in which they are expressed, as by the moral and spiritual truths they convey. Though the actual accounts may be partly figurative or poetical, the view they give of man's sin and of God's purpose of redemption underlies the whole of Scripture.

3. Since all the legislation is contained in the Pentateuch (§ 24 end), and since the arrangement is so uneven (§ 28, 2), it is quite possible that the books now exhibit the laws as they had been handed down in separate transcripts, or even as modified in course of time.

4. Many of the references to the Old Testament by our Lord and by the New Testament writers cannot be explained as mere references to books whose dates are a matter of indifference, but are appeals to facts and events which are of vital importance in the history of revelation. See Matt. viii. 4; xix. 4; xxii. 31, 32; John v. 46, 47; iii. 56; Acts iii. 22, 25; vii.; Rom. iv. 1-3, 10-22; x. 6-13; Gal. iii. 15-18. The vital question is not, Who wrote the books? but, Do they contain a true account of the Divine revelation?

CHAPTER XI

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS: JOSHUA, JUDGES, SAMUEL, AND KINGS

§ 37. THE books from Joshua to Kings form, as regards their subject, **a continuous series**, for they exhibit a connected history; and so we usually speak of them as historical books. The Jews, with the idea that it was prophetical men who wrote the history of their own times (§ 6, 1 (*b*)), **called** these books **the former prophets**, and placed them before the prophets strictly so-termed in the second division of the Canon (§ 3, comp. § 14, 1); but they are all **anonymous**, and we are left to determine from the books themselves the time and manner of their composition.

1. Although the different books of this series are diverse in their style and mode of composition, it will be seen from the manner in which each begins that there is an implied reference to the narrative that precedes. The book of Joshua connects itself in this way also with the Pentateuch (Josh. i. 1).

2. The book of Ruth has its place, as a historical record, where it stands in the English Bible (see Ruth i. 1), and was sometimes counted as forming part of Judges (§ 6).

3. A very slight examination will show that the names

given to the individual books refer to the subjects treated of, and were not intended (not even those of Joshua and Samuel) to denote authorship.

4. The book of Samuel is one whole, and so is the book of Kings. In the Septuagint and other early versions each of these was divided into two as we now have them in our English Bible. Those versions, moreover, taking the books of Samuel and Kings as a connected series, called each of the four parts a book of *the kingdoms* or of *the kings*. So our A.V. describes 1 Samuel as "otherwise called The first book of the Kings," and gives a similar heading to the other books.

§ 38. Comparing the first chapter of Joshua with the last of 2 Kings we shall see that the books now under consideration extend over the **whole course of Israel's history** from the occupation of Canaan **to the Babylonian captivity.** And we may distinguish four great periods, with which the four books of the series broadly correspond: (*a*) the invasion of Canaan under *Joshua;* (*b*) the struggle for the mastery under the *Judges;* (*c*) the rise of the monarchy under *Samuel;* and (*d*) the history of the two kingdoms till the extinction of the *Kings.*

1. **Chronological landmarks.** It is stated in 1 Kings vi. 1 that Solomon, in the fourth year of his reign, began to build the Temple 480 years after the Exodus. The particulars cannot be stated with precision, but they may be approximately set down thus :—

The Desert period lasted	40 years
Joshua survived Moses	25 ,,
The Judges, from Othniel to Samuel	332 ,,
Saul reigned (see Acts xiii. 21)	40 ,,
David reigned (see 1 Kings ii. 11)	40 ,,
Solomon began the Temple after	3 ,,
	480 years

Solomon's reign lasted altogether forty years (1 Kings xi. 42); and it may be useful to observe that, by computing from the beginning to the end of the monarchy, we obtain a similar great period of about 480 years, thus:—

Undivided Kingdom, Saul, David, and Solomon	120 years
Divided Kingdom, till the fall of Samaria, B.C. 722	230 ,,
Thence to the fall of Jerusalem, B.C. 588	134 ,,
	484 years

We must, however, regard these as approximate numbers; for it is evident that it was customary to compute by generations, or spaces of forty years. See below § 43, 3.

2. For the history subsequent to the captivity, we have to turn to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the third division of the canon; along with which may be classed, for this purpose, the books of Esther and Daniel, as well as the prophetical and other books which were written in the exile or after the restoration. The books of Chronicles, though written after the exile, do not practically continue the history farther down than the books of Kings.

§ 39. The books dwell at very unequal length upon different parts of the history; and, in regard to many things about which we might look for information, we are told little or nothing at all. Those subjects, however, which the writers treat at greater length and with evident predilection, serve to indicate to us the **plan and principle** on which the history was written. Thus:—

1. The minute details regarding the partition of the land and the struggle for its possession, in Joshua and

Judges, exhibit the national interest in the fulfilment of the **promise** made to the patriarchs (§ 26).

2. The great length at which the events in David's life are narrated, in the books of Samuel, is in keeping with the significance attached to the **Davidic line** (2 Sam. vii. 12 ff.)

3. The fulness of description, in the books of Kings, of the erection of the Temple, as also the preference shown for the reigns of some kings over others, and the recurrence of certain phrases to describe their characters, prove that it was the **religious aspect** of the history that was the vital thing to the writers.

4. The prominence given to the prophet Samuel in the time of Saul and David, and to Elijah and Elisha in the time of later kings, not to mention others, is very significant. There was a **line of prophets** extending through the whole history, some of whom are not mentioned in the historical books, guiding and moulding the religious life (see Acts iii. 24); and it is evident that to the sacred writers this feature of the history is at least of equal importance with the succession of the line of kings. For this reason the prophetical books should always be studied in connection with the historical period to which they belong.

CHAPTER XII

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

§ 40. THIS book appropriately bears the **name** of the warrior who had been closely associated with Moses (Exod. xxiv. 13; xxxiii. 11), and had been solemnly set apart (Deut. xxxi.) to succeed him, not only as a military commander but as a leader and guide of the people (Num. xxvii. 16-23). It relates the events that took place during his leadership, and closes with the record of his death. It falls into three great **divisions**:—

1. The **conquest of the land** (chaps. i.-xii.) This part is *historical*, both in form and substance. It relates the main operations by which the people under Joshua obtained possession of Canaan. The chief points are: The sending of the spies and the crossing of the Jordan (ii.-iv.); the fall of Jericho (v. 13-vi. 27); the capture (after a reverse) of Ai (vii.-viii. 29); the treaty with the Gibeonites (ix.); the defeat of the leagued kings of the south at the battle of Beth-horon (x.); and the defeat of a similar confederacy in the north near the waters of Merom (xi.) It is obvious that many details are omitted, for a long list of conquered kings is given at the close (xii.); and it is stated (xi. 18) that "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings." Yet the

narrator makes it particularly clear that it is a *holy* war he is describing, for he tells us of the miraculous manner in which the Jordan was crossed (iii.); describes the observance of the Passover (v. 2-12); dwells upon the sin of Achan as the cause of the reverse at Ai (vii.); and relates the confirming of the Covenant at Ebal and Gerizim (viii. 30-35).

2. The **partition of the land** (xiii.-xxii.) This part, while historical in form, is *topographical* and *legislative* in contents. Here the main points are: After a sketch of the land to be divided (xiii. 1-7), and of the territory already assigned to the tribes east of the Jordan (xiii. 8-33), Hebron is given to Caleb (xiv. 6-15), and the three tribes, Judah, Ephraim, and half Manasseh receive their portions in the western territory (xv.-xvii.) Afterwards, the Tabernacle being set up, the remaining tribes, except Levi, receive theirs (xviii.-xix. 48), a special inheritance being assigned to Joshua (xix. 49-51); the cities of refuge and the cities of the Levites are set apart; and the two tribes and a half who had assisted in the conquest are sent to their homes (xx.-xxii.) Here again, while the details are very unequal, the *sacred* character of all the proceedings is clearly indicated. The inheritances are distributed by lot (xiv. 2, xviii. 6, 10), the cities of refuge and the Levitical territory have a religious reference (xx.-xxi.), and the jealousy of the people for national unity of religion is shown in the matter of the altar Ed (xxii. 10-34).

3. The **leader's farewell** (xxiii., xxiv.) This part is mostly *hortatory*. Joshua warns the people against idolatry, renews the Covenant with solemn ceremony, and incorporates a record of the transaction in the Book of the Law. The book closes with an account of the death and burial of Joshua and of Eleazar (xxiv. 29-33).

§ 41. In **style**, different parts of the book of Joshua bear a strong resemblance to different parts of the Pentateuch. This has led to the supposition that originally the component parts of the

Pentateuch (§ 33) extended beyond the death of Moses; and hence by modern writers the name *Hexateuch*, or six-fold book, is used to denote what they believe to have been at one time a continuous work embracing the history of the Conquest of Canaan. In another respect the book of Joshua is closely allied to the Pentateuch. The spirit of the Mosaic time is still active; and, besides the general religious tone which pervades the book, we can observe a special **purpose** throughout, to exhibit the fulfilment of the promise that is at the basis of the Pentateuch. See xi. 23, and again, xxi. 43-45. The **keynote** is "Be strong and of a good courage" (i. 6, 9, 18). The reaction follows in the next book (see Judges ii. 7 ff.)

1. Along with the resemblances to the Pentateuch there are noticeable certain points of difference, and indications that this book was intended to be complete in itself. The references to the "Book of the law of Moses" (i. 8; viii. 34, 35; xxiv. 26) imply the existence, in an independent form, of some antecedent writing. If the works were originally united, the separation must have taken place very early; for the Samaritans, who received the Pentateuch from the Jews (§ 91, 5), have a very different work for their book of Joshua. See also § 14, 1.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

§ 42. THIS book is **named** from the men who appear as the leaders of Israel in the period succeeding Joshua. They are called Judges, primarily because they *judged* Israel in the sense of defending the national cause against enemies; and for the same reason they are called "saviours" (iii. 9, 15 R.V.) It is with this aspect of their activity that the book mainly concerns itself; their civil functions being only barely mentioned. The book falls naturally into the following **three parts**:—

1. The Introduction (chap. i. 1-ii. 5), which is *retrospective*, giving an account of the extent to which the country had been subdued "after the death of Joshua." It connects itself in a manner with the first part of the book of Joshua, repeating sometimes even its words (compare Jud. i. 11-15 with Josh. xv. 15-19).

2. The deeds of the Judges, forming the main part of the book (ii. 6-xvi. 31). This is preceded by an introduction of its own (ii. 6-iii. 6) which is *prospective*, giving a summary view of the whole period to be treated of. Then follow the exploits of the Judges, in regard to *six* of whom we have more or less full details, viz.:—

Othniel, the son of Kenaz, who shook off the oppression of Cushan-Rishathaim of Mesopotamia (iii. 7-11).

Ehud, of Benjamin, who saved Israel from Moab (iii. 12-30).

Deborah, of Ephraim, and Barak, of Naphtali, who defeated Sisera, the general of Jabin, King of the Canaanites (iv., v.)

Gideon, of Manasseh, who drove back the Midianites (vi. 1-viii. 32).

Jephthah, of Gilead, who waged war with Ammon (x. 6-xii. 7).

Samson, of Dan, who contended with the Philistines (xiii.-xvi.)

Besides these, *six* others are mentioned: Shamgar, who performed a daring feat against the Philistines (iii. 31); Tola, of Issachar (x. 1, 2); Jair, of Gilead (x. 3-5); Ibzan, of Bethlehem (xii. 8-10); Elon, of Zebulon (xii. 11, 12); and Abdon, of Pirathon (xii. 13-15); but we are told no more about them than the period of their activity and some details as to their families and position.

Abimelech, the son of Gideon, who, presuming on the high respect paid to his father, set himself up as a king (viii. 33-ix. 57), is not, properly speaking, one of the Judges.

3. **Two detached episodes** placed at the end of the book (xvii., xviii.; xix.-xxi.) These apparently belong to the earlier period of the Judges. The one is the story of Micah and his image-worship, in its connection with the settling of the Danites in the north; the other, the account of the outrage committed at Gibeah, which led to the war of extermination waged by the tribes against Benjamin.

§ 43. The **literary features** of this book are such as to suggest that different parts have come from different hands. Possibly the accounts which form the body of the book were collected and joined together by one writer; but we are left to inference or conjecture for the dates of the several parts. So, although there is evidently a

design in the recurring statements of the numbers of years of servitude and rest, a satisfactory **chronology** of the book cannot be arrived at. One thing is plain, **the aim** of the book is not to relate a number of wonderful tales, but to enforce the lesson of God's providence taught in the experience of the nation. Sin, punishment, repentance, deliverance,—these are the points on which the whole hinges—the philosophy of history implied in this book.

1. The expression that occurs in the closing chapters "In those days there was no king in Israel" (xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 25) leads to the conclusion that these parts at least were written some time after the establishment of the monarchy; whereas such references as are found in i. 21 indicate an earlier period.

2. If it was of purpose that the number of Judges is given as twelve, there is no hint of this in the book itself; nor do they seem to be distributed among the twelve tribes; for three tribes, Levi, Reuben, and Simeon, furnish no judge.

3. The total number of years of "oppression," judgeship, and "rest," added together, amounts to 410, whereas, in 1 Kings, vi. 1, the whole period from the Exodus to the building of the Temple is given as 480 years (§ 38, 1). This has led many to suppose that the years mentioned in this book were not strictly consecutive, but that the different accounts partly overlap one another, some of the Judges being contemporaneous. The recurrence of the number "forty" is doubtless an indication that the time was roughly counted by generations; so that strict precision in the chronology is not to be arrived at.

4. The aim with which these accounts of the Judges are put together is clearly seen in the introduction (ii. 11-18), and in the repetition of almost stereotyped expressions at the opening and the close of the various narratives; *e.g.* iii. 7-9, 11; iv. 1-3, 23, 24, etc. But this

is not a mere religious dressing up of the exploits of a lawless age by the hand of a later editor. The song of Deborah (chap. v.), which bears the impress of the victory which it celebrates, shows that the actors in these stirring scenes were conscious that they were engaged in a sacred warfare. And there are indications of the same fact in the other narratives.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

§ 44. THE two books of Samuel, which were originally one (§ 37, 4), may be conveniently taken together. They bear the name of Samuel, although his death is mentioned as early as 1 Sam. xxv. 1, because he is a prominent figure in the history, forming the connecting link between the period of the judges and that of the kings, the two first of whom he called to their office. The book begins in the judgeship of Eli, and comes down to the close of David's reign. It may be divided into three parts corresponding to the three great personages with whom it deals, although, as will be seen, they cannot be represented independently. These are :—

1. **The period of Samuel** (1 Sam. i.-xii.) In this part we are told of the birth and dedication of Samuel, and of the revelation to him of the doom that was to fall upon the priestly house of Eli (i. 1-iii. 18). He is recognised at Shiloh as "a prophet of the Lord" (iii. 19-21); and when Divine punishment falls upon Israel, in the loss of the ark (iv.), he so moves the people to penience that there is a revival of national religion and zeal, culminating in the battle of Ebenezer (v. 2-vii. 14). And

from this time onwards Samuel is seen moving about in circuit administering the nation's affairs (vii. 15-17). But the course of events had prepared for a new phase of the national life (viii. 1-5). The people ask Samuel to appoint a king over them; and, after warning them, by Divine command, of the dangers to which this would lead (viii. 6-22), he anoints Saul the son of Kish (ix. 1-x. 16), whose appointment is ratified by lot and ordinance (x. 17-26) and vindicated against gainsayers by the king's successful encounter with the Ammonites (x. 27-xi. 15),—after which Samuel formally lays down his own office of judge (xii.)

2. The reign of Saul extends to the end of the first book (1 Sam. xiii.-xxxi.) But here Samuel and David are as prominent in the history as the king himself. Saul distinguishes himself in war against the Philistines and Amalekites, his son Jonathan being equally conspicuous (xiii.-xv.); but he has to be continually reminded that he reigns by Divine sanction; and, after he has twice disobeyed the Divine command given through the prophet, sentence of rejection is pronounced against him (xiii. 8 ff., xv. 9 ff.) From this time onwards David, who has been chosen by God and secretly anointed by Samuel (xvi. 1-13), comes into prominence, the rest of the book containing an account of his rise at the court of Saul (xvi. 14-23), his favour with Jonathan and the people (xvii. 1-xviii. 7), and his persecution by Saul (xviii. 8-xix. 1, etc.) First he takes refuge with Samuel, then he flees to the Philistines, who send him back to Judah (xix. 2-xxi. 15). At Adullam he becomes the chief of a band of disaffected men, and has Gad the Seer in his company. Saul continues his persecution, so that David has to send his parents for safety to Moab, and the priests at Nob have to suffer the king's vengeance (xxii.) Still, by his engagements against the Philistines and by his generosity to Saul when he had him in his power, David wins more and more the confidence of Israel (xxiii., xxiv.); so that, at the death of Samuel (xxv. 1), he is universally regarded as the coming king. During all

these persecutions he is cheered and supported by the self-sacrificing devotion of his friend Jonathan. But he has still to elude the violence of Saul, and, escaping in succession from Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Paran, and Ziph (xxiii.-xxvi.), he finally seeks an asylum with Achish, king of Gath, who assigns him Ziklag for a residence. Here it was only the jealousy of the lords of the Philistines that saved him from fighting against his own country in the war which the Philistines were about to wage with Israel (xxix., xxx.) At last Saul, driven to desperation, consults the witch of Endor, at whose house he learns the doom which is to befall him next day at the battle of Gilboa, where he perishes by his own hand (xxviii., xxxi.)

3. The reign of David occupies the whole of the second book (2 Sam. i.-xxiv.); chaps. i.-iv. relating to the seven years and a half that he reigned at Hebron over Judah alone, while an attempt was made to keep the kingdom for Ishbosheth, Saul's son; and the rest of the book giving his reign at Jerusalem over all Israel. The conspicuous events are the taking of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and the fixing there of the royal residence (v. 1-16); the transference to the capital of the Ark of the Covenant, and preparations for the building of the Temple; with the promise conveyed through Nathan of the continuance of the Davidic house (v. 17-vii. 29). Then follow an account of the enlargement of the kingdom by conquests over the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians (viii. 1-14), a description of the magnificence of David's court, and an enumeration of his officials (viii. 15-x. 19). But another side of the picture is presented in the succeeding chapters. David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba (xi.) is the cause of evil against him out of his own house (xii. 11), culminating in the rebellion of Absalom (xii.-xv. 12). His flight from Jerusalem, the bitter war, with the king's grief at the death of Absalom, and his victorious return to Jerusalem, are narrated at length (xv. 13-xix. 40); but the shadow of greater coming trouble is seen in the jealousies of the tribes, and the revolt of Sheba,

son of Bichri,—the prelude of the disruption of the united Kingdom (xix. 41-xx. 22). The four concluding chapters contain various supplementary matters: the famine and the means taken for its removal (xxi. 1-14), the names and exploits of David's mighty men (xx. 23-26; xxi. 15-22; xxiii. 8-39, poetical pieces of David's (xxii. 1-xxiii. 7), and the numbering of the people, followed by the plague and its cessation (xxiv.)

§ 45. The books of Samuel are evidently constructed with the design of exhibiting a connected history. But their **literary features** indicate that they are composed of various materials, probably belonging to different dates. Though the period which they cover is not very extensive (see § 38, 1), yet the times were troublous, and the narratives may have been derived from both oral and written sources; so that, as is usually the case when different accounts are preserved of the same events, it is difficult to arrange the whole in perfect harmony. It is only by inferences from isolated passages that we can form an opinion as to the date of **final composition.**

1. The author incorporates, *e.g.*, certain poetical pieces, giving us to understand that they are not of his own composition. See 1 Sam. ii. 1-10; 2 Sam. i. 19-27, compare verse 18; xxii., with which compare Ps. xviii.; xxiii. 1-7. The passages 2 Sam. xxi. 15-22 and xxiii. 8-39, may be drawn from state records.

2. It is extremely difficult to find a complete harmony between the passages relating to David's presentation at the court of Saul in 1 Sam. xvi. 19-23 and xvii. 12-31, 55-58; many regard them as two different accounts which have become fused together. The Septuagint, omitting several passages in these chapters, presents a consistent and continuous narrative. Compare also 1

Sam. vii. 13 with ix. 16; x. 5; xiii.; and observe how far 1 Sam. xiii. 8 is separated from x. 8.

3. There is no reference to the Captivity in the books. On the other hand, 2 Sam. v. 5 must have been written after the death of David, and 1 Sam. xxvii. 6 would bring us down to the time of the divided kingdom. The recurring phrase, "unto this day" (1 Sam. v. 5; vi. 18; 2 Sam. vi. 8; xviii. 18, etc.), suggests a considerable lapse of time between the events and the record of them; and other antiquarian remarks (1 Sam. ix. 9; 2 Sam. xiii. 18), point in the same direction.

§ 46. These books are deeply interesting as a portion of **the sacred history** of the Old Testament. They show the transition from the more unsettled period of struggle under the judges to the period of consolidated national life under the monarchy; and exhibit the rise and growth of institutions which fitted Israel to fulfil its calling in God's plan of revelation. The chief things to be noticed are :—

1. The setting up, not merely of a kingly form of government, but of **the line of David**, with special sanction and promise (2 Sam. v. 17; vii. 29),—a line which lasted to the close of the national history. The writer clearly indicates that there was a prospective religious significance in this choice.

2. The prominence which **prophecy** henceforth assumes. Though it did not actually begin with Samuel, yet from his time onwards it takes a more official form and public position; for we can trace a line of men taking up the same attitude that he held towards both king and people.

3. It is interesting to find that prophetic men who are mentioned in these books are referred to in the books of Chronicles as writers of **history** (1 Chron. xxix. 29, R.V.; 2 Chron. ix. 29). We know that later prophets,

as Isaiah and Jeremiah, wrote history (see 2 Chron. xxvi. 22; xxxii. 32; and many chapters in the book of Jeremiah); and we hear of a "recorder" and a "scribe" at David's court (2 Sam. viii. 16-18, comp. xx. 24, 25). It is not improbable, therefore, that the original records contained in these books came from such hands.

4. It is also interesting to note that David, who was renowned for his skill in **music and poetry** (2 Sam. xxiii. 1; Amos vi. 5), is found associated with those companies of the prophets in which these gifts were exercised (1 Sam. xix 18 ff.)

CHAPTER XV

THE BOOKS OF KINGS

§ 47. THE two books of Kings may, like the books of Samuel, be considered together (§ 37, 4). The **name** explains itself; for the books contain a history of the kings, beginning with Solomon, under whom the monarchy was still undivided, continuing it in the double line which arose in the time of his successor, and carrying it on, after the northern kingdom was swept away, to the point at which the last of the kings of Judah also was taken captive. It will be convenient to arrange the contents of the two books according to these **three stages** of the history:—

1. The reign of Solomon (1 Kings i.-xi.) There is a very close connection between the opening of the books and the close of the books of Samuel, for Solomon ascended the throne while David was still alive. In chaps. i. and ii. we are told how the attempt of Adonijah to obtain the succession was defeated, mainly by the skill of Nathan the prophet, and how the throne was secured to Solomon; to whose reign the rest of this section is devoted. Chaps. iii.-ix. 9 describe the *internal* condition of the kingdom; and here the chief points are: the wisdom of the king (iii.); the arrangements of his court,

and his great fame (iv.) ; his treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, whereby all necessary materials were procured for the building of the Temple and palace at Jerusalem (v.-vii.); and the completion and dedication of the Temple (viii.-ix. 9). The remainder of the section (ix. 10-xi. 43) deals more particularly with the *external* affairs of the kingdom, such as Solomon's relations with Hiram, his alliance with the king of Egypt, his trade with Ophir, and the visit to him of the queen of Sheba (ix. 10-x. 13). The magnificence displayed on this occasion (x. 14-29) suggests the mention of his foreign wives and their evil influence (xi. 1-13), foreboding the troubles that were in store for the kingdom (xi. 14-43).

2. The divided kingdom (1 Kings xii.-2 Kings xvii.), from the rupture under Jeroboam till the Assyrians take Samaria and carry its people into captivity. The whole space may be divided into three periods :—

(*a*) The *first period* extends to the beginning of Ahab's reign, and exhibits the two kingdoms in sharp antagonism (1 Kings xii. 1-xvi. 28). The events that led to the breaking away of the ten tribes from the sway of Rehoboam are fully explained (xii. 1-xiv. 20). In the southern kingdom three reigns are embraced in the period : those of Rehoboam and Abijam who suffered from the attacks of Egypt, and were at constant war with the northern kingdom (xiv. 21-xv. 8) ; and that of Asa, who showed reforming zeal, and was successful in his conflict with Israel (xv. 9-24). In the northern kingdom, the line of Jeroboam ends with his son Nadab (xv. 25-30) ; then a usurper Baasha is succeeded by his son Elah, who is murdered by his own servant Zimri. The murderer is, however, driven from the throne by Omri, the head of the army, who, after a civil war with Tibni, gains the supremacy and founds the dynasty which goes by his name (xvi. 1-22).

(*b*) The *second period* embraces the whole duration of the house of Omri in Israel, and in Judah extends to the commencement of the reign of the boy king Joash (1 Kings xvi. 23 to 2 Kings xi. 20). In this period, owing to an

intermarriage, the two kingdoms are brought into friendly contact. The reign of Ahab, which lasted twenty-two years, bulks largely in the narrative; for he was a powerful prince, and his marriage with Jezebel, daughter of the king of Phœnicia, led him to introduce the Tyrian worship of Baal and Astarte, against which Elijah raised his well-known protest (1 Kings xvi. 29-xix. 14), Elisha and Jehu being designated to carry out the reforming work (xix. 15-21). We are told of Ahab's successful war against Benhadad of Syria, of his tyrannical dealing with Naboth of Jezreel (xx., xxi.), and how he was mortally wounded at Ramoth-Gilead (xxii. 1-40). In this war against Syria, he had for his ally Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah. The alliance continued in the time of Ahab's sons and successors, Ahaziah and Joram (1 Kings xxii. 40-53; 2 Kings iii.), and was cemented by the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings viii. 16-18). But it was a fatal alliance to both houses; for Joram of Israel, suffering from wounds received in a war with Syria, was suddenly attacked and killed by his own general Jehu, who at the same time put to death both Jezebel the queen-mother, and also Ahaziah, king of Judah, who had come to visit his sick kinsman (2 Kings ix., x.) Athaliah, hearing at Jerusalem of the death of her son Ahaziah, kills all the seed royal—one infant, Joash, alone escaping—and usurps the throne for six years. At the end of that time young Joash is exhibited to the people and proclaimed king by the high priest Jehoiada; Athaliah herself perishes, and with her the house of Omri is at an end (2 Kings xi.)

(*c*) The *third period*, in which the two kingdoms are again less friendly, or even hostile, extends to the fall of Samaria (2 Kings xii.-xvii.); the kings of Judah being Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah (or Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The line of Jehu was continued in Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II., and Zechariah, the greatest of whom was Jeroboam II., who had a reign of forty-one years and saw the widest extension of the dominion of Israel (xiv.

23-29). In this period, besides their conflicts with one another (xiv. 1-16), both kingdoms had to wage war with the kingdom of Damascus or Syria (2 Kings xii. ; xiii. 1-13, 22-25), and had a more formidable enemy to encounter in Assyria. Especially after the strong hand of Jeroboam II. of Israel was relaxed, and a succession of usurpers held the throne, that kingdom hastened to its decay. Shallum, after a month's reign, is murdered by Menahem, who reigned ten years but had to pay tribute to Pul of Assyria to gain his support on the throne. His son, Pekahiah is dethroned, after a reign of two years, by his officer Pekah ; in whose reign Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, invades the country and carries away many of its inhabitants. Pekah is next dethroned and succeeded by Hoshea (2 Kings xv. 8-31), in whose reign the Assyrians again come up, lay siege to Samaria, put an end to the kingdom, and settle foreigners in the place of the exiled inhabitants (xvi. 9-xvii. 41). Nor was the kingdom of Judah free from foreign terrors. Jotham had to face a hostile combination of Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus (xv. 32-38) ; and the danger became so pressing in the time of his successor Ahaz that the latter sent offers of submission to Assyria as the price of assistance against his two northern neighbours (xvi. 1-8).

3. The surviving kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom being now at an end, the remainder of the book deals with the fortunes of the sole kingdom of Judah (2 Kings xviii.-xxv.), from the sixth year of Hezekiah down to the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Judah. Hezekiah's reign is marked by a revival of religion, in which the activity of the prophet Isaiah is conspicuous ; but a hint is given, on the occasion of an embassy from the king of Babylon, of the approaching downfall of the kingdom of Judah (xviii.-xx.) The catastrophe is only accelerated by the impious conduct of the next two kings, Manasseh and Amon (xxi.); and the promise of better things, raised by the reforming zeal of Josiah, is quenched by the early death of that king fighting against Pharaoh-necoh at Megiddo (xxii. 1-

xxiii. 30). From this point the history hastens to its close. Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, is made king by the Egyptians, instead of another son who had been chosen by the people; but he is hard pressed by the Babylonians, and his successor Jehoiachin is reduced so low that he surrenders himself to Nebuchadnezzar. National independence is no more; Jehoiachin, with 10,000 of his people, is taken to Babylon, and his uncle Mattaniah or Zedekiah placed on the throne. But in a short time the king of Babylon, finding him unfaithful, marches into Judah with an army, and, after a siege of three years, takes and destroys Jerusalem, leaving only a few inhabitants under a governor Gedaliah, whom they murder, taking refuge in Egypt to escape the wrath of the king of Babylon. The narrative breaks off rather abruptly when Jehoiachin was still alive, and treated with honour, in the land of his captivity (xxiii. 31-xxv. 30).

§ 48. The **plan** of these books is evidently to show the growth and decay of the kingdom, and to indicate the influences which controlled the history. The whole is presented from a religious point of view; and so far as the fortunes of the two kingdoms are concerned, one fundamental point is never lost sight of, viz. the promise of perpetuity to the house of David, which finds repeated expression from stage to stage (1 Kings ii. 4; xi. 34-39; xv. 4, 5: 2 Kings viii. 19; xix. 34; xx. 6), down to the very close, when a gleam of hope shines through the darkness of exile (2 Kings xxv. 27-30). As to the **literary form**, we have to notice the following characteristics:

1. There is a **framework**, of almost stereotyped phrases, at the beginning and end of each reign, within which the particulars recorded of the successive kings are arranged. Thus, at the beginning of a reign, we are

usually told how old the king was at his accession, how many years he reigned, and, in the case of a king of Judah, his mother's name. Then comes a general description of the character of his rule, as good or evil "in the eyes of the Lord." At the close of the reign, the place of the king's burial and the name of the succeeding ruler are stated, and a reference is given to another authority for fuller details.

2. In regard to the **divided kingdom**, the method is to record first the events relating to the northern, and then to give the contemporaneous history of the southern. This leads sometimes to the repetition of the same events under two reigns. Compare 2 Kings xvii. 5, 6 with xviii. 9 ff. and 1 Kings xv. 16 with verse 32.

3. The method just mentioned suggests the **sources** from which the materials were mostly drawn, viz. some such state records of the two kingdoms as are named respectively the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (mentioned seventeen times; see 1 Kings xiv. 19, etc.) and the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (fourteen times; see 1 Kings xiv. 29, etc.) From the reign of Solomon onwards there are formal notices of records of this kind (1 Kings xi. 41); the few instances where they do not occur, being cases in which the reigns came to a sudden or violent end, as those of Joram of Israel and Ahaziah (2 Kings ix. 21-28) and the last kings of the two lines, viz. Hoshea of Israel, and Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah of Judah.

4. The same circumstance explains why indications of **different dates** appear in the books. The closing verses bring down the history to the thirty-seventh year of the captivity (2 Kings xxv. 27); yet the author, incorporating his materials, was apparently not careful to adjust the dates to his own time; as when he tells us that the staves of the ark remained in their place "unto this day" (1 Kings viii. 8), and that "Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day" (xii. 19).

§ 49. Covering as they do so wide an expanse

of time, the books can only give a condensed account of the **history**; and, owing to the plan, a great deal that would have been interesting is never touched upon. In regard to the more external relations of the kingdoms, our knowledge has been supplemented, and the accuracy of the books confirmed, by the monuments,—particularly those of Assyria. The books of Chronicles also furnish additional details, and exhibit the history from another point of view. But the writings of the prophets who flourished in the period of the kings are of special value, being contemporaneous documents bearing upon those very matters which are represented as most vital in the history.

1. The knowledge derived from the monuments is particularly valuable in showing the causes that brought about those various conflicts with foreign powers, which are mentioned by the sacred writer. They enable us also to fix with greater precision certain important dates. Thus we learn that about David's time Egypt was distracted with internal rivalries, and the Assyrian empire was weak; so that the rapid extension of territory under David and Solomon (2 Sam. viii. 1-14; 1 Kings iv. 21) is the more easily explained. The Egyptian monuments, however, tell us of the revival of military conquest under **Shishak**, of which we have evidence in 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26. Assyria also soon entered on a new career; and the reign of **Shalmaneser II.**, from B.C. 858 to 823, was a long series of victories, extending his power to the Mediterranean. By this time the kingdom of Syria or Damascus, which had grown at the expense of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 23-25), was the most formidable power in the West; and at the battle of **Karkar** (B.C. 853), where he defeated a confederated force, the names of the king of Damascus and of Ahab of Israel who, as we know from 1 Kings xx. 34, became allies, occur in the list of

conquered kings. It must have been about this time also, that Mesha, King of Moab, was enabled to throw off the yoke of Israel (2 Kings iii. 5), a fact recorded on the famous **Moabite Stone.** On the death of Shalmaneser, the attention of Assyria being turned in another direction, **Hazael** of Damascus and his successor **Benhadad III.** were able to harass Israel (2 Kings xiii. 3). When, however, **Jeroboam II.** had shaken off the Syrians and extended his own dominions at their expense, we are not astonished to learn that Rimmon-nirari (810-781), the grandson of Shalmaneser, found it easy to reduce Damascus to vassalage. The decline of the kingdom of Israel after Jeroboam's death (see § 47, 2), was owing not only to the weakness of its own rulers, but to the growing power of Assyria. A military adventurer named **Pul** (2 Kings xv. 19), had seized the throne, B.C. 745, and, under the name of **Tiglath-pileser II.** (2 Kings xv. 29) set up what is known as the second Assyrian empire. After consolidating his power in his own dominions, he came to the West, and at **Arpad,** near Aleppo, had a decisive victory in 740, which made him the arbiter of the fates of all the kingdoms in Western Asia. Among his tributaries are mentioned Uzziah of Judah and Menahem of Israel. Ahaz of Judah also invoked his aid against the combination of Israel and Syria; and, finally, when in 732 Damascus was taken and its inhabitants carried away, Ahaz was among the princes who assembled to honour the conqueror (2 Kings xvi. 5-10; comp. Isaiah viii. 6, 7). The strong hand of Assyria was not relaxed by Tiglath-pileser's successor, **Shalmaneser IV.,** for it was he that besieged Samaria; and when it was taken in 722 by **Sargon,** his general and successor (2 Kings xvii. 5, 6), nothing then stood between Assyria and the little kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah continued to pay the tribute which had been exacted from his father Ahaz, till a new complication arose by the appearance at Jerusalem of the ambassadors of **Merodach-baladan** (2 Kings xx. 12; comp. Isaiah xxxix. 1). This was a chief of

Babylonia who was struggling for the independence of his country, and had sent ambassadors to Palestine and Egypt to secure allies against Assyria. Before, however, they had time to take concerted action Sargon came upon them (B.C. 711), and Hezekiah was one of the first to suffer. To this invasion of Sargon, in all probability, we have reference in various parts of Isaiah, particularly chaps. x., xi.; but more prominence is given to an invasion, ten years later, of his son **Sennacherib**, who came to enforce supremacy over the disaffected local kings. The miraculous discomfiture of his vast army is narrated in 2 Kings xviii. 13-xix. 35.[1] He was succeeded by **Esar-haddon**, to whom, and also to his successor Assur-bani-pal, Manasseh of Judah was tributary. After the death of Assur-bani-pal, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks, the vast empire of Assyria gives signs of breaking up. Elam was threatened by the Persians, Babylonia was becoming independent, and the invasion of **Scythians** from the north caused general consternation in Western Asia. The power of Assyria being relaxed, we are able to understand how Josiah found no difficulty in extending his dominion over Samaria (2 Kings xxiii. 15, 19), and how the Egyptians also turned their thoughts to Asiatic conquest. It was in disputing the passage of **Pharaoh-necoh** that Josiah was killed at Megiddo (xxiii. 29, 30); but the Egyptians were soon afterwards (in B.C. 605) defeated at **Carchemish**, on the Euphrates, by Nabopolassar, king of Babylonia, which had now succeeded Assyria as the great eastern empire; and from that time onwards, the Babylonians were undisputed masters of Western Asia. The name of **Nebuchadnezzar**, son of Nabopolassar, is associated with the overthrow of Jerusalem (B.C. 587); and his son, **Evil-Merodach**, is on the throne when the narrative of the books of Kings breaks off.

1 It is now generally believed that it was Sargon, not Sennacherib, that invaded Palestine in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. The sacred writer, thinking of the two invasions together, gives more prominence to the later one. See Nicol's *Recent Explorations in Bible Lands*, chap. xvi.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PROPHETS

§ 50. THE prophets were a series of men appearing throughout the history of Israel, claiming to be, and acknowledged to be, in a special manner, exponents of God's will, interpreters of His dealings, and teachers of their nation. They seem all to have exercised such functions towards the people of their own times, and a number of them have left written compositions, embodying their teaching.

1. The function of the prophet is described in Deut. xviii. 15-22. It is indicated by the various names applied to the prophets, as "seer" (1 Sam. ix. 9; 2 Sam. xxiv. 11); "man of God" (1 Sam. ii. 27); "watchman" (Jer. vi. 17); "messenger of the Lord" (Hagg. i. 13). It is denoted also by the manner in which the revelation of God's will was made to them, as the "hand of the Lord" (Jer. i. 9; Ezek. i. 3, etc.); "spirit of the Lord" (Mic. iii. 8); "word of the Lord" (Isa. i. 10); "burden" or oracle (Isa. xiii. 1, R.V. *marg.*); "vision" (Isa. i. 1); and very frequently "saith the Lord" (Isa. i. 18, 24, etc.), or "thus saith the Lord" (Jer. ix. 15, etc.)

2. Moses, who was pre-eminently a spokesman of God, is a typical prophet (see Deut. xviii. 15; Hos. xii. 13).

Abraham also is called a prophet (Gen. xx. 7); and even David by St. Peter in Acts ii. 30. The **office** was not hereditary, nor confined to any class. Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1) and Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 3) were priests; Amos was a herdman (Amos i. 1; vii. 14); and there are some instances of prophetesses, as Deborah (Jud. iv. 4), Huldah (2 Kings xxii. 14), Noadiah (Neh. vi. 14). But from the time of Samuel onwards (see Acts iii. 24) there were, particularly in the northern kingdom, associations presumably for the training of those who were to exercise the prophetic office (1 Sam. x. 5 ff.; xix. 18 ff.; 1 Kings xx. 35; 2 Kings ii. 3 ff.; iv. 38, 42 ff.; v. 22; vi. 1; ix. 1).

3. The intimate connection of the prophets with the events of their time is seen not only in such outstanding men as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, but in the cases of Nathan, Gad, and others who have left no written prophecies (2 Sam. xii. 1-15; 1 Kings i. 11-39; 2 Sam. xxiv. 11; 1 Kings xi. 29-31; xiv. 7 ff.; xii. 22-24; 2 Chron. xv. 1 ff.; xvi. 7 ff.; xix. 2; xx. 14). See also § 39, 4; § 46, 2, 3. Of the writing prophets also it is true that we can only comprehend their position by remembering that they were **men of their time**, and spoke with reference to events that were seen by those whom they addressed. We shall not, however, do full justice to their words unless we remember that they were **men above their time**, seeing things in a better light and in different relations from their contemporaries,—and also **men for all time**, giving utterance to truths which were not fully unfolded in the dispensation under which they lived.

4. The writings of the prophets exhibit the greatest **variety**, not only because the circumstances and times of each varied, but because the individuality of the prophet himself was left in full activity. Not only "at sundry times" but "in divers manners" God "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. i. 1).

§ 51. The books of the writing prophets are

all, with the exception of Daniel, found in the second division of the Hebrew Canon, though not in chronological order. The three great books, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, stand in the historical order of the men whose names they bear; but of the twelve minor prophets, two at least (Hosea and Amos) are earlier than Isaiah, and the three at the end (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) are later than the captivity.

1. The history of Israel may be divided roughly into certain periods according to the ascendency of successive powers in and about Palestine. These may be here indicated, for the sake of greater convenience in referring the prophetic and other writings to their respective dates :—

(*a*) Syrian	period, beginning about		870 B.C.
(*b*) Assyrian	,,	,,	750 ,,
(*c*) Chaldean	,,	,,	625 ,,
(*d*) Persian	,,	,,	538 ,,
(*e*) Grecian	,,	,,	331 ,,
(*f*) Maccabaean	,,	,,	168 ,,
(*g*) Roman	,,	,,	63 ,,

For details of the first three periods, compare § 49, 1. For the Persian period, see particularly §§ 72, 74, 88, and 91. The Grecian period begins with the supremacy of Alexander of Macedon, and embraces the time during which Palestine was successively under the domination of the Ptolemies of Egypt (from about 300 B.C.) and the Seleucidae of Syria (from about 200 B.C.) The Maccabaean dynasty is otherwise named Asmonaean, or Hasmonaean.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

§ 52. **The prophet Isaiah**, though he is not the earliest of the writing prophets, may be described as the greatest of them; for the book that bears his name, in the variety, beauty, and force of its style, and in the sublimity of its contents, takes the foremost place in the prophetical literature. Little is recorded of his **private life**, but he exercised his **public office** during a long and most eventful period of the national history.

1. From himself we learn that he was married and that he had at least two sons, to whom he gave symbolical names (vii. 3; viii. 3, 18). In the book of Chronicles he is mentioned as a writer of history (2 Chron. xxvi. 22; xxxii. 32). A Jewish tradition makes his father Amoz a brother of King Amaziah (no doubt with a desire to explain his great influence at the court); and, according to another often-repeated tradition, he suffered martyrdom in the reign of Manasseh, by being sawn asunder.

2. The names of the kings under whom he prophesied (i. 1) do not give us a precise indication of the **duration of his active life**; for Jotham was for years associated on the throne with his father Uzziah (2 Kings xv. 5; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21); and, at the other extremity, we are not told whether Isaiah survived Hezekiah. Reckoning,

however, from the death of Uzziah (vi. 1), which probably took place in 740 B.C., to the invasion of Sennacherib (xxxvi., xxxvii.), which happened in 701 B.C., we have at least a period of forty years for the prophet's active ministry. The events that occurred in this period, and furnished occasion for Isaiah's public teaching, were most momentous in their bearing on the fortunes of the two kingdoms (§ 49, 1). The long and prosperous reign of Uzziah (2 Kings xv. 1-3; 2 Chron. xxvi. 1-23) was succeeded by the Syro-Ephraimitic war waged by Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel, first against Jotham and then against his son Ahaz (2 Kings xv. 37; xvi. 5 ff.; compare 2 Chron. xxviii. 5 ff.); during which the great Assyrian power appears on the stage and calls forth the prophet's prediction of the fall of Judah's confederate enemies (Isa. vii., viii.) Soon after (in 734) followed the subjugation of Syria and Samaria by Tiglath-pileser, and the capture of Damascus in 732 (2 Kings xvi. 7 ff.; xv. 29; 2 Chron. xxviii. 16 ff.; Isa. xvii. 1-3). Then came the fall of Samaria itself in 722 B.C., in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings xvii. 3 ff.; xviii. 9 ff.; Isa. xxviii. 1 ff.), followed by the military operations of Sargon against Palestine and Egypt (Isa. x., xx.) And still more closely came the shadow of impending trouble when the host of Sennacherib invaded Judah in 701 B.C., and his ambassadors taunted the people of Jerusalem under its very walls (2 Kings xviii. 13-xix. 37; Isa. xiv. 24-27; xvii. 12-14; xxxiii.) All these movements, in their bearings upon Judah and the neighbouring nations, as well as the attitude of Egypt (xix., xxx.) and the growing importance of Babylon (xiii. 1-xiv. 23; xxxix.), furnished matter for the prophet's teaching during what must have been a harassed and busy life.

§ 53. In keeping with the varied and extensive experience of the prophet, the book of Isaiah is very diversified in its **contents**, according to the subject treated and the tone of address or treatment that was suited to each case. The parts are

not arranged chronologically, and in many cases we are left to discover their reference from the subject-matter. The book falls, however, into two great divisions :—

1. Part First (i.-xxxix.) consists mostly of independent pieces, sometimes furnished with special headings (ii. 1 ; xiii. 1 ; xv. 1, etc.), or introduced by historical notices (vi. 1 ; vii. 1 ; xiv. 28, etc.) ; at other times without any such indication (x. 5 ; xxiv. 1 ; xxviii. 1, etc.) In most instances they have the appearance of being the written deposit of verbal utterances ; but some may be comprehensive statements of whole periods of prophetic activity (*e.g.* ii.-v. ; vii. 1-ix. 6 ; xxviii.-xxxiii.) As to the subjects of these prophecies, it will be observed that there are two groups of mainly *home* prophecies, viz. those in chaps i.-ix. 7, relating to Judah and Jerusalem, and those in chaps. xxviii.-xxxiii., relating both to Judah and Samaria ; while those contained in ix. 8-xxvii. 13 refer to foreign nations, with the exception of two, contained in chap. xxii., against Jerusalem and against Shebna. Chaps. xxxiv., xxxv. are more general (in this respect resembling xxiv. to xxvii.), referring to judgment coming on all nations ; and chaps. xxxvi.-xxxix., which are historical, relating particularly to Hezekiah's sickness and the campaign of Sennacherib, have their counterpart in 2 Kings xviii.-xx.

2. Part Second (xl.-lxvi.) is broadly distinguished from Part First, both in literary form and in subject-matter. It has the appearance of being one sustained composition rather than a number of spoken addresses ; and whereas the situation in the first part was the Assyrian period in which Isaiah lived, the standpoint here is the time of the exile, and the tone is mainly that of consolation in the near prospect of deliverance, the name of Cyrus, who gave the edict permitting the return (B.C. 536), being expressly mentioned (xliv. 28 ; xlv. 1). We cannot doubt that the deportation of the ten tribes, and the ominous threatening of a similar fate

for Judah, had accustomed Isaiah to the thought of the captivity and its ultimate issues. So that, if these chapters are from his hand, we must assume that, in spirit, he placed himself in the exile, and, from that as a prophetic standpoint, depicted the restoration and the final glory. Most modern critics, however, think that these chapters are an anonymous production of the exile, which was united to the prophecies of Isaiah. They generally hold also that some passages in the first part, referring distinctly to Babylon (see xiii. 1-xiv. 23; xxi. 1-10), are likewise of late date. But it is evident that, by the time of Hezekiah, the power of Babylon was sufficiently formidable to call forth special prophetic utterances (see xxxix.) This second part may be divided into three sections, marked by a similar refrain, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked": viz. (*a*) chaps. xl.-xlviii., in which the dominant note is *comfort;* (*b*) chaps. xlix.-lvii., in which the *suffering servant* is prominent; and (*c*) chaps. lviii.-lxvi., which dwell on the *future glory*. The most striking conception of the book is that of "the servant of the Lord," who is sometimes Israel as a whole (xlii. 19), sometimes the faithful or true Israel (xliv. 1, 2, 21), and rises, especially in the middle portion (lii. 13-liii. 12), into a mysterious Person who makes atonement for His people and brings in the final glory.

§ 54. In all the **characteristics of a true prophet** (§ 50, 3) Isaiah is pre-eminently great. He stands in time midway between Moses and Christ; and he has been fitly called the evangelical prophet, for no other book of the Old Testament anticipates so fully as this the truth that was at last revealed in the Gospel.

1. In speaking to the men of his time, Isaiah is bold in denouncing sin (i., v., etc.), fearing neither king nor people (vii. 1-13), **faithful** to the nation's God where faithless men abound (xxx., xxxi.)

2. But while actively engaged in the affairs of his time, he seems ever to live in the near presence of the **High and Holy One**, who appeared to him at the inauguration of his work (vi.) The God in whose name he speaks is one whose holiness will assert itself in the subduing of everything that is proud and lofty (ii. 12 ff.), in the triumphing over all evil (ii. 19, 21), and finally will manifest itself in a glorious reign of peace and righteousness. And this conception furnishes the prophet's idea of the duty of the true Israel: viz. to fear humbly before such a God, and to believe in His faithfulness. They who do so are the faithful remnant (iv. 3; vi. 13, etc.) who shall be preserved through all troubles (viii. 7-10, etc.), the stock of a new people in the kingdom that is to come (vii., viii. 21-ix. 7).

3. In this way the prophet is led by the Divine Spirit to give most solemn **anticipations** of the revelation **of Jesus Christ** (see ii. 2 ff.; vii. 14; viii. 8, 10; ix. 2-7; xi. 1-9, etc.) In the second part of the book these prophetic intimations are startling in their vividness. And it is to be remarked here that, even if these chapters were not written by Isaiah of Jerusalem, but by some prophet of the captivity, their similarity to the rest of the book in style and spirit, which has caused them to be included in the work of Isaiah, shows the carrying out of the lofty ideas which he himself expressed. No one denies that, by whomsoever written, they must have been penned some centuries before Christ, and that they only find their sufficient accomplishment in His atoning death, and the glory that follows.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

§ 55. UNLIKE Isaiah, **the prophet Jeremiah** has given us so many details of his **personal history** that we are able, from the book which bears his name, to construct an intelligible biography.[1] He is later in time than Isaiah, and, like him, he exercised the **prophetic office** during a most critical period of the nation's history. Isaiah saw the northern kingdom swept away, and foresaw the downfall of the southern; it was Jeremiah's lot to see the ruin of Judah and the carrying away of its people into captivity.

1. He was of the priestly city of Anathoth, near Jerusalem (i. 1), and his father Hilkiah is by some identified with the high priest who discovered the law-book in the eighteenth year of Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 8). He was called to the work at an early age (i. 6), was unmarried (xvi. 2), and exercised his ministry partly in his native place (xi. 21 ff.), but mostly in Jerusalem (xi. 6), from the thirteenth year of Josiah till after the exile, *i.e.* a period of forty years (B.C. 626-586). It was **a life of sorrow** and suffering, in which he had to

[1] The following chapters are particularly full of personal details: xi. 21-xii. 6; xxvi., xxxvi., xx.; xxi. 1-10; xxxvii., xxxviii., xxxii., xxxix.-xliv.

bear the reproaches of priests and high officials (xx. 2; xxxvii. 13), and even harsh treatment at the hands of the populace (xi. 19; xxvi. 8, 9), the military party (xxxviii. 4), and the king himself (xxxvi. 20 ff.); with only occasional support from the elders (xxvi. 17 ff.) and the lower classes (xxxviii. 7 ff.) The times in which he lived would have tried the heart of the most courageous; and the prophet was naturally of a despondent and timid disposition. Hence we find a tone of sadness and weariness running through the whole book, and Jeremiah has been called the *weeping prophet* (see ix. 1, 2; xv. 10; xx. 14-18). He was carried to Egypt by the exiles who fled thither (xliii. 6), and, according to the tradition, he was stoned to death in that country.

2. The **activity** of Jeremiah is intimately bound up with the momentous events that culminated in the downfall of the kingdom of Judah. We lose sight of the prophet Isaiah in the reign of Hezekiah, after the discomfiture of Sennacherib (B.C. 701); and it is not till B.C. 626 that Jeremiah appears on the scene. The interval is filled up with the impious reign of Manasseh (B.C. 685-641), the brief reign of Amon (640-639), and the first thirteen years of that of Josiah (Jer. i. 2). It was in the reign of Manasseh that Egypt burst the yoke of submission to Assyria; and when Josiah came to the throne it had become a power to be feared or courted by the political parties at Jerusalem. Jeremiah had been for five years an acknowledged prophet when Josiah's reformation took place (Jer. i. 2; comp. 2 Kin. xxii. 3 ff.), and he no doubt anxiously watched, but was not deceived by, the events of the twelve years that followed, for the improvement was mainly superficial, and the hopes that had been raised were quenched by the death of the king in his encounter with the Egyptians at Megiddo. Soon thereafter the Assyrian empire was brought to an end (B.C. 607), and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, now master of the East, broke the Egyptian power at the battle of Carchemish (B.C. 605), in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim. It was in this same year that the prophet, who saw that

there was now no hope of saving the state, sent Baruch to read in public the roll containing his prophecies (xxxvi.) In vain, however, did Jeremiah seek to recall his people to a better mind, in vain did he counsel them to submit to Babylon and look not to Egypt for help. Jehoiakim, refusing to pay tribute, was attacked by the forces of Babylon (2 Kings xxiv. 2), killed, and ignominiously buried, as the prophet had foretold (Jer. xxii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30). His successor Jehoiachin had only reigned three months when Nebuchadnezzar carried king and people into captivity, leaving behind only what the prophet describes as "naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad" (xxiv. 2); and even these also were destined soon to be carried away. Among this remnant, during the expiring throes of the nation's life, the prophet exercised the latter part of his ministry, now protected by king Zedekiah as far as his feeble protection could avail, then caught and treated as a deserter, and at last imprisoned in a dungeon, obtaining deliverance finally at the hands of the Babylonians when, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the city was sacked and the temple burnt. Permitted to remain at Jerusalem under Gedaliah the governor, he strove in vain to restrain the people from their evil ways. His friend the governor was cruelly murdered, and the murderers carried the prophet himself with them to Egypt, where we last hear of him, still protesting against the idolatry of his countrymen (xliv.)

§ 56. **The book** of Jeremiah **contains** prophecies given forth by him on various occasions, with many historical details relating to the prophet and his time. Many of the prophecies are introduced by statements of the time at which they were delivered; the occasion of others has to be inferred from themselves. In regard to the **composition of the book** as a whole we have more precise indications than is usually the case with the Old Testament books.

1. **The book** as it stands may be roughly **divided** into: (*a*) prophecies relating chiefly to the kingdom of Judah (i.-xlv.); (*b*) discourses directed against foreign nations (xlvi.-li.); (*c*) a historical appendix on the siege and capture of Jerusalem (lii.)

In the main the prophecies seem to be arranged in **historical order**, yet sometimes prophecies relating to the same subject are placed together, although belonging to different times; and sometimes historical sections are disjoined from prophecies to which they relate. In the LXX. Version the collection of foreign prophecies (xlvi.-li.) comes after chap. xxv. 13; and it is to be remarked that the Greek translation of the book of Jeremiah as a whole diverges more from the Hebrew text than is the rule in that version—being for the most part briefer. It is very probable that the closing chapters, and perhaps other passages in the book, have been revised by a hand later than Jeremiah.

2. We are told in chap. xxxvi. how, in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim, Jeremiah, at God's command, caused Baruch to **write in a roll** all the words that had been spoken to him "against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations . . . from the days of Josiah even unto this day"; and how, when the roll was burned by the king, another was written containing "many like words" besides. This second roll no doubt formed the nucleus of the present book, which, as seems to be indicated in i. 1-3, would receive additions after the time referred to. We may with great probability assign the prophecies in chaps. i.-vi. to the reign of Josiah; those in vii.-xx. to the reign of Jehoiakim; and those in xxi.-xxxviii. to the reign of Zedekiah.

§ 57. In the midst of his own sorrow, and even in the deepest despondency, **Jeremiah** is faithful to his task **as a prophet**, and bold in declaring the word of the Lord. Though **his message** was largely directed to immediate affairs, it pointed

forward to a better dispensation, and his words have a meaning **for all time.**

1. We see **fidelity** to his calling triumphing over natural timidity throughout his life. See his own words (xx. 8, 9). He seems ever to have been conscious of the assurance given to him at his call (i. 8; xv. 20). And his faith in God's promise is illustrated in his purchase of a field when the ruin of the country was imminent (xxxii.)

2. The **truths** mainly **insisted on** by Jeremiah are: (*a*) that mere attention to worship or veneration for its forms is worthless (vii. 21-23; iii. 16; vii. 8-11). The law must be *written on the heart* (iv. 4, 14; xvii. 9; xxxi. 33). (*b*) Consequently the *individual* rather than the state is the object of divine regard (v. 1; ix. 1-6; xviii.) (*c*) In thus condemning the old, Jeremiah anticipates a new order of things. Though he says little of a personal Messiah, he prepares His way (see xxiii. 5-8; xxx. 4-11; xxxiii. 14-26).

CHAPTER XIX

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

§ 58. The prophet Ezekiel was one of the captives taken to Babylon, in the first captivity of Judah, along with Jehoiachin in the year B.C. 597 (xxxiii. 21; xl. 1; compare i. 2). He was thus contemporary with Jeremiah and survived him. His **prophetic activity** began five years after he was taken captive (i. 1-3), and extended at least over twenty-two years; for the last date mentioned in his book is the 27th year of the captivity, viz. B.C. 570 (xxix. 17), which was sixteen years after the deportation of Jeremiah to Egypt.

1. Ezekiel, unlike Jeremiah, gives few details of his **private life.** He was the son of Buzi, of a priestly family; lived among the exiled Israelites at a place called Tell Abib; was married, and had a house of his own (xxiv. 18; viii. 1). He was resorted to for advice and guidance by the elders of the captivity (viii. 1; xiv. 1; xx. 1; compare xxxiii. 30). There is a tradition that he was put to death in Babylonia by a prince of his own people whom he had reproved for idolatry.

2. The **national events** that occurred in the lifetime of Ezekiel are for the most part those in which Jeremiah had a prominent part (§ 55, 2). In whatever

sense we take "the thirtieth year" to which he alludes (i. 1),[1] Ezekiel must have been familiar from boyhood with the person and work of Jeremiah; and, up to the destruction of Jerusalem, though he was in exile, the fortunes of his native land formed the subject of his prophecies. One of the most striking passages in the book is the lament over the princes of Israel (xix.), in which, under the figure of the whelps of a lioness, he represents the fate of Jehoahaz, who was carried captive to Egypt (vv. 1-4; compare 2 Kings xxiii. 31-34; Jer. xxii. 10-12), and of Jehoiachin, who was taken to Babylon (vv. 5-9). Of the external circumstances of his life in Babylon, the prophet tells us very little.

§ 59. **The book** seems to be arranged chronologically, and naturally falls into **two divisions**, of twenty-four chapters each, corresponding to the two great periods of the prophet's life. He saw the national catastrophe and survived it, and his book is occupied with two great subjects: I. The ruin of the city and state (i.-xxiv.) II. Prophecies of future restoration and glory (xxv.-xlviii.) The treatment throughout is highly **symbolical**; and chaps. xl.-xlviii. are quite unique in Old Testament literature.

1. The **first division** (i.-xxiv.) consists of the following parts:—(*a*) In the first year of his ministry (i.-vii.): the prophet's call and mission to the exiles (i.-iii. 21); and symbolical prophecies of the overthrow of the city (iii. 22-vii. 27). (*b*) In the following year (viii.-xi.): more precise prophecies against the city because of its idolatries (viii.); and the symbolical departure of the Lord from the temple (ix.-xi.) (*c*) Later but not dated (xii.-xix.): reasons for the destruction o

[1] Some think it was the thirtieth year of his own age; others that he dates from the accession of Nabopolassar (625 B.C.), while others think we are to count from the reform of Josiah (621).

the state—unbelief and giving heed to false prophets (xii.-xiv.); certainty of the event, however painful (xv.-xvii.); yet a new order of things shall follow (xviii.) (*d*) Two years from the prophet's call (xx.-xxiii.): the necessity of the doom, in that Jehovah's name has been profaned (xx.), and the iniquity of Israel is now full (xxi.-xxiii.) (*e*) After several years, and when Nebuchadnezzar had begun the siege of Jerusalem (xxiv.): the symbol of the caldron, to signify the siege and dispersion.

2. The **second division** (xxv.-xlviii.) consists of the following parts: (*a*) *Preparatory* to the restoration; judgments on the nations round about Israel (xxv.-xxxii.) (*b*) The *restoration* itself; the conditions of the new kingdom (xxxiii.), and descriptions of the ruler (xxxiv.), the land (xxxv., xxxvi.) and the people (xxxvii.), and the Lord's defence of His people in the latter day (xxxviii., xxxix.) (*c*) The *final glory* of the redeemed, as seen in the vision of the temple (xl.-xliii.), its services (xliv.-xlvi.), and the condition of the land, with its life-giving river issuing from the temple (xlvii.), and the arrangement of the tribes (xlviii.)

3. The **symbolism** which is characteristic of Ezekiel's style shows itself (*a*) in highly figurative *language*, as in the comparison of Tyre to a stately ship (xxvii.), etc.; (*b*) in symbolical *actions*, such as are employed also by other prophets (compare 1 Kings xxii. 11; Isa. xxi.; Jer. xix. 10; xxviii. 2, 10; li. 59-64). There may be reason to doubt whether all these actions were performed by the prophets in the literal sense of the words. Some of them certainly (see iv., v.) seem to be ideal, and suited to impress rather in the written page than by outward form. (*c*) In *visions*. With one of the grandest of these the book opens (i.), and chaps. xl.-xlviii. are quite apocalyptic, and have strongly influenced the imagery of the book of the Revelation in the New Testament.

§ 60. In his **teaching** Ezekiel shows that he

had been influenced by that of Jeremiah; and he carries out into greater detail, and enforces with more emphasis, the great truths which that prophet taught. In particular:—

1. He insists upon the responsibility of the **individual**; combating the prevailing ideas of his time that the people suffered for the sins of their fathers (xviii. 2), and that they were under a ban which no repentance could remove (xxxiii. 10).

2. Like Jeremiah, he pronounces **condemnation on the past** history of Israel, and accuses them of idolatry even in Egypt (xvi.; xx. 7, 8; xxiii. 3, 8; compare Jer. vii. 25; xvi. 12).

3. Being of priestly family, like Jeremiah, he shows great **zeal for the Law** (xx.) and clothes his vision of the final glory in forms borrowed from the Temple and its service (xl.-xlviii.) Yet no two prophets teach more distinctively the inward spiritual character of religion.

4. Though the new order of things is to be based on individual heart religion, it will be a **Messianic kingdom** (xvii. 22-24), with "David" as prince for ever (xxxvii. 24, 25).

CHAPTER XX

THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

§ 61. THE twelve prophetical writings which from the earliest times the Jews have classed together as one book, are called the *minor* prophets, solely on account of their size. The whole taken together do not equal the book of Isaiah in bulk; but though "brief in words," they are "mighty in meaning." They belong to different dates within the whole period of about four centuries which is covered by written prophecy; and in literary style, as in subject-matter, they exhibit the greatest variety and individuality.

1. It was no doubt because they were of small compass that they were taken together and written on one roll. The Jewish name given to them is simply the "Twelve."

2. Jerome was of opinion that the whole of the twelve are arranged in chronological order. Others arrange them in three groups, according to historical periods: viz. Hosea to Nahum belonging to the pre-Assyrian and Assyrian periods; Habakkuk and Zephaniah to the Chaldean period; and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to the post-exilic period (§ 51, 1). There are, however, great differences of opinion as to the dates of some of them. In our version the order of the Hebrew canon is

retained; but in the LXX. the order of the first six is: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah.

HOSEA

§ 62. Hosea was a native of the kingdom of the ten tribes, and is the only prophet of that kingdom from whom we have written prophecies. He has told us either very little or a great deal of his **personal history,** according as we understand the opening chapters of his book. From the heading (i. 1) we gather that he was an early contemporary of Isaiah; but he must have ceased his **ministry** before the fall of Samaria.

1. We conclude that he belonged to the northern kingdom from the special acquaintance with it which he exhibits, and his almost exclusive reference to its affairs. Some take chaps. i.-iii. in the literal sense that Hosea's wife proved unfaithful to him, and that through his love to her he was led to understand the unquenchable love of God to Israel. Others take the whole as an allegory.

2. Hosea could not have prophesied during the full reigns of all the kings mentioned in i. 1. Probably he began his work in the latter end of Jeroboam's reign (which closed B.C. 749) and ceased about the accession of Pekah (in B.C. 736), since he does not mention the deportation of Israelites by Tiglath-pileser in 734 (2 Kings xv. 29). It was a time of rapid changes and revolutionary movements [see § 47, 2 (*c*)]; and some have seen in various passages of Hosea allusions to some of those events.[1]

1 Some, *e.g.*, apply chap. vi. 8 to the murder of Zechariah by Shallum, who is called the son of *Jabesh* (2 Kings xv. 10), though others refer it to the event recorded in 2 Kings xv. 25. More definite are the allusions in viii. 10, probably to the Assyrians then in the land; and in x. 6, to the tribute paid to the Eastern Empire (compare 2 Kings xv. 19, 20). If Shalman (x. 14) stands for Shalmaneser, it can hardly be the king who laid final siege to Samaria, but must be an earlier king of the same name.

§ 63. The **contents** of the book of Hosea have the appearance of being rather a summary of his teaching than a series of spoken discourses. It is not easy to classify the portions or to observe the principle of **arrangement**, though some think it is chronological. This arises in great measure from the style, which is somewhat broken and abrupt, owing to the emotional character of the prophet. There are, however, passages of great poetic beauty, and the one great thought that fills the prophet's mind,—the **love of God**, is kept in view throughout.

1. **Analysis** of the book. Chaps. i.-iii., whether literal or symbolical, furnish the key to the whole. Israel, the faithless spouse, is throughout personified, and the several discourses in the sequel (iv.-xiv.) exhibit in various aspects the unfaithfulness that had characterised the whole history and was prevalent at the time. Thus in iv. 1-v. 7 we have reproof of glaring immorality; in vi. 4-vii. 16 treachery and sinful foreign alliances; in viii., ix. a godless monarchy and a polluted worship; and x., xi. point out how inveterate and deep-seated the sin has been. But even in his direst threatenings the prophet breaks off into tender entreaty (vi. 1-3); and ends with the final triumph of Divine love (xii.-xiv.)

2. The following passages in later prophets show great resemblances to the thoughts of Hosea: Jer. ii., iii., xxxi. 31 ff.; Ezek. xvi., xxiii. The references to Hosea in the New Testament should also be studied: with chap. vi. 6, comp. Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7; with chap. xi. 1, comp. Matt. ii. 15; and with chap. ii. 23, comp. Rom. ix. 25, 26.

JOEL

§ 64. Of the **personal history** of Joel, son of Pethuel, we know nothing. His **date** has to be

determined, if possible, by a consideration of the general situation implied in the book, and by any references to historical events that it furnishes. The main **subject** of the book is clear and the **contents** well arranged. In **style** the work takes a first rank among prophetic literature; and in its **teaching** it points significantly forward to the New Testament dispensation.

1. As he confines his national view to Judah and Jerusalem, it is concluded that he was a native of the capital. Some have supposed, from the prominence he gives to the Temple service (see i. and ii.), that he was a priest.

2. **Contents.** Joel's prophecy was occasioned by a severe visitation of drought and locusts, in view of which he delivered two highly pictorial discourses, calling to repentance and supplication (i. and ii. 1-17). These form the *first* part of the book. The *second* part refers to the future. The plague is removed, so that the wasted years are restored (ii. 18-27); and this leads to the prophecy that "afterward" the Divine Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and then, with signs in heaven and on earth, shall come "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (ii. 28-31). In this great consummation "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape" (ii. 32, R.V.); while the "nations" shall be gathered into the valley of Jehoshaphat (*i.e.* "Jehovah judges") and trodden in the winepress of the Divine anger (iii. 1-21).

3. Some have interpreted the **locusts** (i., ii.) figuratively of enemies of Israel, the four names (i. 4; ii. 25) being taken to represent four great empires (as in Dan. vii., etc.) Others explain them ideally, like the locusts of the Apocalypse (Rev. ix.) But Joel's description, though highly poetical, is true to the life, and the four names are elsewhere applied to the locust, and may

indicate stages of its growth. The heavy hand of God on nature, in an agricultural country like Palestine and to the prophetic mind, was sufficient to suggest to Joel his great theme, the "**day of the Lord.**"

4. The indications of **date** are so obscure that very divergent views have been held on the subject, and possibly we have proof of this uncertainty in the place the book occupies in the LXX. Version (see § 61, 2). It is generally agreed that the book must be dated either very early (*e.g.* in the infancy of Joash, *i.e.* before B.C. 850; see 2 Kings xi. 1-3) or very late (viz. after the time of Nehemiah, B.C. 445), the main reasons in either case being the absence of reference to a king, or to Assyria or Babylonia, and the prominence given to the priests and the Temple service. The advocates of the early date explain these facts by the minority of the king, the regency of Jehoiada the priest, and the circumstance that the great eastern powers had not yet extended to Palestine. Those who maintain the late date say that the facts are best explained on the supposition that the powers of Assyria and Babylonia had come to an end, that the community at Jerusalem was under the rule of priests with a regular Temple service, and that the kingdom of the ten tribes (which is not mentioned) had been swept away. There are references to other enemies of Israel (iii. 4, 6, 8, 19); but these are difficult of explanation on either view, owing mainly to our defective knowledge of the history. The style of the book gives no indication of a late date; and it is difficult to understand its being placed between the earlier prophetical books of Hosea and Amos, if it was of post-exilian origin.

5. The prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (ii. 28-32) is particularly alluded to by St. Peter in Acts ii. 16-21; and St. Paul quotes the promise of the call of the Gentiles (ii. 32) in Rom. x. 13.

AMOS

§ 65. From Amos himself (whose name is spelled differently from that of the father of Isaiah) we learn some interesting particulars of his **personal history.** He was a native of Tekoa (i. 1), a place about twelve miles S.S.E. from Jerusalem. He did not belong to any of the prophetic societies (§ 45, 2; § 50, 2), but was a herdman and a dresser of sycomore trees (vii. 14, R.V.) Though a native of the south, he prophesied in the northern kingdom, and was reproved for his plain speaking by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (vii. 10 ff.) In **date** he is to be placed a little before Hosea, probably not later than about B.C. 760, and he is very frequently spoken of as the earliest of the writing prophets (but compare § 64, 4, § 66, 1, and § 67). If this is the case, his book is all the more remarkable for its finished **style,** its high moral **tone,** and the wide **view** of history which it exhibits.

1. **Tekoa** was an outlying frontier place (see 2 Chron. xi. 6) and seems to have been famed for the ready wit of its inhabitants (2 Sam. xiv. 2).

2. The **time** in which Amos prophesied was one of the greatest prosperity in both kingdoms. It may be that in chap. vi. 14 we have an indication of the extension of territory which was effected by Jeroboam II. (2 Kings xiv. 25); and the sins for which the prophet rebuked Israel are such as generally follow a condition of material prosperity, viz. luxury, with its hardening influence on the affections and its ministering to vice, along with worship scrupulously observed but devoid of spiritual life. It is not clear whether all the prophecies in the book were spoken at one time. Some suppose that,

being driven from Bethel, the prophet retired to his native place, and there wrote his book.

3. **Contents.** The book may be divided into three parts: (*a*) Chaps. i., ii.—a prophetic survey and denunciation of the neighbouring nations for their breaches of the Divine law, ending with Judah and Israel.

(*b*) Chaps. iii.-vi.—three discourses against Israel, each beginning with "Hear this": viz. (1) declaration of the *necessity* of God's threatened judgment (iii.); (2) reproofs of oppression, idolatry, and impenitence (iv.); and (3) denunciations, in three parts, against the grinding of the poor (v. 1-17), formal worship (v. 18-27), and luxury and wantonness (vi.)

(*c*) Chaps. vii.-ix.—visions, still of a threatening kind: viz. the locust (vii. 1-3), fire (vii. 4-6), the plumb-line (vii. 7-9, and here comes the encounter with the priest of Bethel, vii. 10-17), the basket of summer fruit (viii.), and a vision of the Lord (ix.)

4. If Amos is the earliest, or one of the earliest, of the writing prophets, his **book** is **remarkable** (*a*) as showing that literary composition had by his time been well developed and long practised; (*b*) as proving that prophetic activity and influence were well-established facts (ii. 11; iii. 7), a testimony all the more striking in that he himself belonged to no prophetic guild; and (*c*) as exhibiting in fulness and freshness the same great thoughts that are found in all written prophecy. The primary message of the prophet, as befitted the time in which he lived, was a condemnation of sin in its various prevailing forms; but the God whose messenger he was is represented by him as the moral governor of the whole earth (ix.), who, just because He was the God of Israel, would visit upon His people their iniquities (iii. 2; ix. 7, 8). Yet, though the "day of the Lord," for which the careless professed to long, would be a day of judgment (v. 18, 19), the faithful would be preserved, the Davidic house would be set up more firmly, and the world blessed in the coming glory (ix. 9-15).

OBADIAH

§ 66. Of the prophet Obadiah himself nothing is known. The **subject** of the brief book which bears his name is a denunciation against Edom for hostility shown to Israel, leading up to an announcement of the "day of the Lord." But the **occasion** of the prophecy cannot be very clearly determined, and accordingly there have been (probably from an early time, see § 61, 2; compare § 64, 4) different opinions about the **date** of the book.

1. The hostility of **Edom**, the "brother" of Israel (Obad. 10; compare Gen. xxxii. 3), is seen throughout the history. The country was subjected to the sway of David (2 Sam. viii. 14), but shook off the yoke in the reign of Joram, the son of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings viii. 20-22). Again the Edomites were subdued by Amaziah and Uzziah (2 Kings xiv. 7, 22[1]), and again they asserted their freedom in the time of Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 6; 2 Chron. xxviii. 17). On none of these occasions, however, do we hear of Edom taking part in the infliction of such a "calamity" on Judah as Obadiah describes (vv. 10-16), unless the brief reference to the time of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 17) be so taken. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the incursion of Philistines and Arabians in the reign of Joram, referred to in 2 Chron. xxi. 16, in which it is supposed the Edomites took part (see 2 Kings viii. 20); in which case the date of the book would be about B.C. 850 and Obadiah would be the earliest writing prophet (see § 65). It is very generally felt, however, that the description of Judah's "calamity" (vv. 10-16) can only apply to the final capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The prophets who lived about that time certainly utter heavy denunciations against Edom (see

[1] Elath or Eloth was "on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings ix. 26).

Jer. xlix. 7-22; Ezek. xxv. 12-14; xxxv.; compare Lam. iv. 21; Ps. cxxxvii. 7), though they indicate that the hostility was of long standing (Ezek. xxxv. 5), and we find the same feeling expressed in the early prophet Amos (i. 6, 9, 11; ix. 12). There is a passage in Jeremiah (xlix. 7-16) which so strongly resembles some verses in Obadiah (1-6, 8) that a common origin must be assigned to them; and, since the prophecies of Jeremiah against the nations (Jer. xlvi.-li.) were pronounced before the captivity (see Jer. xxv. 13), if he borrowed from Obadiah, the date of the latter must be earlier. The view is now, however, held by many that this little book of Obadiah contains an old prophecy (vv. 1-9) against Edom (which Jeremiah also employed), and that this was expanded by a later writer and applied to the destruction of Jerusalem. It was not unusual for prophets thus to adopt and enlarge earlier oracles. Compare Isa. ii. 2-5 with Micah iv. 1-5, and Jer. xlviii. with Isa. xv., xvi.

2. There are some remarkable resemblances between Obadiah and Joel. Compare, *e.g.*, ver. 11 ("cast lots") with Joel iii. 3; ver. 15, etc., with Joel iii. 14, etc.

JONAH

§ 67. **"Jonah, the son of Amittai,"** was the name of a prophet, of Gath-hepher in Galilee, who in the days of Jeroboam II. foretold the extension of territory that was to be effected by that king (2 Kings xiv. 25). He was therefore earlier than Amos (§ 65), for Jeroboam's death is to be placed about B.C. 750. But the work before us has nothing in its contents to lead us to identify it with the prophecy referred to. Indeed, it is rather a book *about* Jonah than a collection of his utterances; and it is so different in form from any other of the prophetical writings, among which it has a place,

that very great varieties of opinion have been held as to its **meaning and purpose.**

1. The **contents** of the book are familiar. Jonah, commissioned to go and cry against Nineveh, takes ship to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. A storm arises, and Jonah, indicated by lot as the cause of it, is cast into the sea, which then becomes quiet; and the prophet, saved by a great fish, prays unto the Lord in his trouble. A second time he is ordered to go to Nineveh, and this time proclaims his message, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The Ninevites, alarmed, fast and put on sackcloth; the Lord repents of the evil; and the prophet, disappointed at the result, sits under a booth "till he might see what would become of the city." The Lord teaches him, by his grief at the withering of a gourd, the lesson of Divine compassion on man and beast.

2. The **form** of the book is thus historical; and, if we omit the second chapter, the whole reads continuously. It is observable, however, that the book ends abruptly, without any proper conclusion of the *story;* and this and other peculiarities have given occasion to diverse opinions as to the **meaning and purpose** of the whole. These have varied, according as the book has been considered more or less strictly historical, from a literal interpretation of the whole to one entirely mythical. Between these extremes different accounts have been given of its teaching, as, *e.g.*, that it was designed to show that salvation can only come from God, and that its ultimate ground lies in the Divine love; or that prophecy is conditional on repentance, and that a prophet may not seek to evade the Divine call. One truth, however, is so strongly enforced at the close,—the all-embracing love of God, without respect of persons or nations,—that it has led in modern times to another view of the book, which may be called the allegorical or parabolical explanation. According to this view, Jonah is the representative of Israel as a whole, which for unfaithfulness to its mission to the world was

delivered into captivity (the "great fish"); from which being delivered, it was again set as a witness to the heathen. But instead of rising to the Divine purpose, Israel took more and more delight in its own little dignity and exclusiveness (the "gourd" being the Temple, etc.), and needed to be reproved for not perceiving God's purpose of love. In support of this view it has been pointed out that Jeremiah (li. 34, 44) speaks of the captivity under the figure of a devouring animal (compare Isa. xxvii. 1); and in another passage (xviii. 7, 8) teaches the very truth that was taught to Jonah. On this supposition, the book would be later in date than Jeremiah, and would exhibit a conception of religion and of Israel's calling that was not common in earlier books.

3. If the Psalm in chap. ii. is read by itself (vv. 2-9), it will be perceived to be rather an expression of thanksgiving for deliverance (as from drowning) than a prayer for rescue. Many of the verses, also, are found in various Psalms (see *marg. ref.*), some of which are of late date. These features have led some to conjecture that the symbolical language of Jeremiah just alluded to was at a later time interpreted literally, and the Psalm then inserted as appropriate to one in Jonah's position.

MICAH

§ 68. No fewer than eleven persons mentioned in the Old Testament bear the name of Micah; and one of these, Micah, son of Imlah, was a prophet in the time of Ahab and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 8). The author of this book was a native of Moresheth-gath, a place in Judah; and his date is fixed sometime before the destruction of Samaria (chap. i. 1, 6; compare Jer. xxvi. 18). He is thus contemporary with Isaiah, and it is interesting to compare the utterances of the two men, the one

(Isaiah) living at the capital, the other a native of the country.

1. **Contents.** The book of Micah seems to be a summary of prophetic utterances given forth on different occasions. It is not easy to perceive the connection in several places; but the expression "Hear ye," repeated three times (i. 2; iii. 1; and vi. 1), may be taken as a formal mark, dividing the book into **three sections.** (*a*) The *first* section (i., ii.) threatens judgment, which falls first on Samaria (i. 6-8), and then reaches Judah (i. 9). A vivid description (with striking word-plays on the names of the places) is given of the panic of the inhabitants before the invader (i. 10-16); and the sins are enumerated which have called down this severe judgment: viz. idolatry (i. 5, 7), covetousness and oppression (ii. 1-5, 8, 9), drunkenness (ii. 11), and giving heed to false teachers (ii. 6-7, 11). (*b*) The *second* section (iii.-v.) continues the strain of denunciation and threatening (iii.), but passes on to glowing predictions of the time when Zion shall be the religious centre of the world (iv.), and a new Davidic king shall arise (v. 2-4), whose reign shall be one of universal peace (v. 5, 10-15). (*c*) The *third* section (vi., vii.) is more elegiac in tone and almost dramatic in form. The Lord has a controversy with His people for the manner in which they have requited His goodness (vi. 1-5); and, touched by His appeal, they ask what they may do to serve Him (vi. 6, 7). He desires nothing but doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God (vi. 8); but since these have been wanting, judgment must follow (vi. 9-16). Then follows a lament over the general corruption (vii. 1-6); and finally, the chastisement being perhaps supposed to have fallen, affliction produces in Israel a spirit of humility, penitence, and hope, and the book ends with confident trust in a God who delighteth in mercy (vii. 7-20).

2. As **compared with Isaiah** it will be noted that Micah has little to say of foreign powers and national

politics (such as would engage attention at the capital), but dwells upon the oppression of the poor and the peasant classes (see ii. 2-5, 8-10; iii. 1-3; vi. 12). The passage iv. 1-5, which is found with little variation in Isaiah ii. 2-5, may possibly be quoted by both from a well-known older prophecy. No prophet has held forth more distinctly than Micah the Messianic hope of the Old Testament (see iv. 1-5; v. 2-4; vii. 18-20).

NAHUM

§ 69. **The prophet** Nahum was a native of Elkosh, which, on the authority of Jerome, is said to have been in Galilee, though another tradition places it near Mosul, the ancient Nineveh. Though no **date** is prefixed to the book, the time of its composition can be approximately determined from two references. The prophet **predicts the fall of Nineveh**, which took place B.C. 607; and he speaks of No-amon or Thebes as having been already destroyed (iii. 8-10, R.V.), and this took place in B.C. 664. Between these two limits the actual date has, if possible, to be more precisely ascertained from the book itself.

1. The **one subject** of the book is "the burden of Nineveh" (i. 1); and the three chapters of which it is composed are three orderly stages in one connected whole. In chap. i. there is a sublime description of the God who taketh vengeance on His adversaries (ver. 2), but is a stronghold to His own in the day of trouble (ver. 7), and this God is represented as about to execute judgment on His people's enemies. Chap. ii., depicting most graphically the fall of Nineveh, shows us the besiegers (vv. 2-4) and the besieged (vv. 5-10), and ends with a taunting proverb against what had been a den of lions (vv. 11-13). In chap. iii. the prophet returns to the

description of the terrors of the siege (vv. 2-4); and, varying the figure, depicts the city as a harlot, and exults over her fate (vv. 5-7). Her end shall be like that of No-amon, and all her traders shall be like locusts, that take wings and fly away (vv. 8-19).

2. Those who have attempted to determine more precisely the date of the prophecy point out that Israel is held fast by Assyria (i. 13); that half of the people (the northern kingdom) has been emptied out (ii. 2); that the enemy has passed through the land (i. 15); and, if these indications are meant to be more than general descriptions, they may point to the heavy pressure of Assyria upon Judah in the reign of Manasseh. See 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, R.V., and compare § 47, 3 and § 49, 1.

3. The style of Nahum has been generally remarked upon for its vividness in description. His conception of the God of Israel is also very exalted. There is, however, an absence of reference to the specific Messianic hope, which is so prominent a feature of Micah.

HABAKKUK

§ 70. **This prophet** belonged to Judah, and there is a tradition that he was of a Levitical family, based, no doubt, on the liturgical terms occurring in chap. iii. 1, 19. His book naturally follows Nahum. That prophet foretold the destruction of Nineveh, and Habakkuk's great **theme** is the downfall of the Chaldean power, though he treats it in a broad and general manner. His **date** is variously fixed according as the presence of the Chaldean on the soil of Palestine is regarded as more near or more remote. Habakkuk has a marked individuality both in **style** and **tone**; and one expression he employs (ii. 4) has become historical from the way it was adopted by St. Paul

(Gal. iii. 11) and by Luther, in the great question of justification by faith.

1. The book falls into **two parts**: In the *first* part (i., ii.) the prophet complains that his outcry against violence is unheeded (i. 1-4), and is told that God is raising up the Chaldeans to inflict punishment (i. 5-11). But this only perplexes the prophet, who reflects on the pride and wickedness of this chosen instrument (i. 12-17); and he resolves to retire to his watch-tower that he may have his doubts solved (ii. 1). The answer comes in an oracular form, "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (ii. 4, R.V.), and this will be proved true in fact, though it should tarry in its accomplishment (ii. 2-3). In the certainty of its fulfilment the prophet bursts forth in a triumphant taunting parable, consisting of five *woes* directed against the great world-power (ii. 5-20). The *second* part (chap. iii.) is a psalm or hymn, called "a prayer of Habakkuk," in which, after the invocation (ver. 2; comp. ii. 4), the prophet prays for the execution of judgment, but also for the exercise of mercy. Then follows a glorious display of the Divine majesty (vv. 3-7), the result of which is the consternation of God's enemies (vv. 8-15), but on the prophet's mind quiet confidence in the heaviest trouble, expressed in the beautiful hymn at the close (vv. 16-19).

2. The more **precise date** is to be determined by consideration of such passages as chap. i. 5, 6, in which the people addressed are supposed not to be familiar with the Chaldeans, and the succeeding verses (7-17), in which the appearance and actual ravages of the invaders seem to be described. The historical events that help us in determining the date are: the destruction of Nineveh (in B.C. 606), when the power of Nabopolassar was coming to its height, and the battle of Carchemish (in 605), when the Chaldeans gained a notable victory over the Egyptians (see § 49, 1, end). Such events would bring the Chaldeans within the horizon of the people of Judah, and

most modern writers place the prophecy about this time, in the reign of Jehoiakim. Others, however, carry it back to the reign of Josiah, chiefly on the ground that the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah are supposed to refer to the book. Compare Hab. i. 8 with Jer. iv. 13 and v. 6; and Hab. ii. 20 with Zeph. i. 7. But the priority may be the other way.

ZEPHANIAH

§ 71. Of the personal history of this prophet we know nothing, for, though his genealogy is given for four generations (i. 1), we are not told whether the Hezekiah to whom it is traced is the king of Judah of that name. His date falls "in the days of Josiah," who reigned B.C. 640 to 608, and he speaks of the destruction of Nineveh as still in the future (ii. 13). His book, though brief, is comprehensive, embracing the two great subjects of prophetic teaching, judgment (i. 2-iii. 8), and salvation (iii. 9-20),—and these extending to all nations.

1. Contents. (*a*) Destruction is about to fall, particularly on Judah and Jerusalem (i. 2-6). It will be a day of sacrifice, in which the heathen will partake (i. 7), and the chief victims are court officials with foreign manners (i. 8, 9), merchants (i. 11), and the indifferent ones among the people (i. 12). It will be a day of wrath calling all classes to repentance (i. 13-ii. 3); and it will extend to the neighbouring Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites (ii. 4-11), to distant Ethiopia and Nineveh (ii. 12-15), but will rest most heavily on Jerusalem, for "the Lord in the midst of her is righteous" (iii. 1-8). (*b*) Therefore the faithful are admonished to wait patiently; for the end of the great work of judgment will be the conversion of the nations to God, the restora-

tion of the captives, and the eternal reign of the King of Israel in the midst of her (iii. 9-20).

2. The description of impending judgment is so circumstantial (*e.g.* i. 2, 3, 7, 13, 16, 17) that many are disposed to think the immediate **occasion** of the prophecy was the great irruption of Scythians which took place in the early part of the reign of Josiah (see § 49, 1).

3. The **"day of the Lord,"** suggested so often to the prophets by prevailing calamities or general moral declension (see § 64, 3; § 65, 4; Obad. 15), is by none more vividly depicted as a *dies irae* than by Zephaniah (i. 15). On the other hand, there is nothing in prophetic literature more grand than his prediction of the **glorious appearing** of the Lord in Israel (iii. 14-20)

HAGGAI

§ 72. The **three prophets** that stand last among the twelve all belong to the time **after** the return from **the captivity**, and they are placed in chronological order. **Haggai** was contemporary with Zechariah; and **his book** contains four utterances, all given forth in the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspis, B.C. 520. His style shows little ornament, and his prophecies are plain and directed to special situations of his time.

1. The following **chronological landmarks** for the period will be found useful:—

B.C. 597. Jehoiachin taken prisoner. Ezekiel among the captives.
" 586. Capture of Jerusalem.
" 536. Edict of Cyrus (Ezra i.); first return of captives under Joshua and Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 2; iii. 2, 8).
" 535. Foundation of Temple laid (Ezra iii. 8-10). Operations stopped through intrigues of the Samaritans (Ezra iv.)

B.C. 520. Darius Hystaspis issues decree for rebuilding the Temple (Ezra iv. 24; vi.); **Haggai** and **Zechariah** prophesy (Haggai i. 1; Zech. i. 1).

„ 515. Temple completed (Ezra vi. 14, 15).

2. The **situation** in the time of Haggai may be gathered from his book, and from the relative narrative of the book of Ezra (chaps. i.-vi., which should be read in this connection). The little community had a laborious task before them, and the difficulties were aggravated by the opposition of the hostile neighbours. In the circumstances their energies were spent in maintaining their position and in providing for their own subsistence, and therefore a prophet was needed to arouse their zeal and encourage their hope.

3. Accordingly Haggai uttered his **four prophecies**: (*a*) Sixteen years had passed and the Temple was not built, and yet the people had built comfortable dwellings for themselves (i. 4). The result was that their labours in the field had not been blessed (i. 5-11). This was spoken in the sixth month (September). It stirred the spirit of rulers and people so that they commenced the work on the 24th day of the same month (i. 12-15). (*b*) In the following month, to encourage those who had seen the glory of the former temple, he declares (ii. 1-9) that the present building, though externally inferior, would have a greater glory, for the "desirable things" (ii. 7, R.V.) of all nations would come to it. (*c*) Still in the same year, about two months after the preceding, Haggai pronounces other two prophecies (ii. 10-19, and 20-23). In the first, by a ceremonial question propounded to him, he teaches that as the touch of the unclean pollutes the clean, so the worldly disposition mars everything, and brings a curse on honest labour. In the second the prophet casts a look into the future, when the kingdoms of the world shall be shaken, and the Davidic king shall be as a signet on the Lord's hand.

ZECHARIAH

§ 73. **The prophet** Zechariah is described (i. 1) as the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo; and Iddo was one of the priests who returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Neh. xii. 4, 16). We learn from Ezra v. 1 and vi. 14 that Zechariah was **contemporary with Haggai**, and the book itself dates some of his prophecies in the second and fourth years of Darius Hystaspis, *i.e.* B.C. 520 and 518 (see § 72). The book consists of **two great parts**: the former being chiefly a series of visions, the dates of which are given; the latter a series of prophecies of a very different character, whose date and occasion it is very difficult to determine.

1. The **first part** (i.-viii.), after an exhortation to repentance, enforced by a reference to the fathers who had not taken heed to the warnings of the "former prophets" (i. 1-6), contains *eight* symbolical visions, all designed to encourage the leaders in the building of the Temple, viz.: (*a*) Riders on horses of different colours,—Jehovah's messengers, who report that all the earth is quiet, and that the time of favour is near (i. 8-17). (*b*) Four horns broken by four smiths,—indicating the breaking of Judah's enemies (i. 18-21). (*c*) A man goes forth with a measuring-line,—a symbol that the city will be too small for its inhabitants; the Lord will be her defence, and many nations shall be joined to her (ii.) (*d*) Joshua, clothed in filthy garments, with Satan at his right hand, is acquitted and allowed access to the Divine presence,—an assurance of God's restored favour and forgiveness. Joshua and his fellows, through whom blessing is now dispensed, are but types of a better mediator, the Branch (iii.) (*e*) The golden candle-

stick (*i.e.* the restored community) receiving oil (*i.e.* Divine grace) through two olive-trees (viz. the spiritual and temporal heads, Joshua and Zerubbabel, iv. 1-5 and 11-14). An assurance of success is given at the same time to Zerubbabel (iv. 6-10). (*f*) A flying roll, to show that the punishment of sin will fall upon the sinner (v. 1-4). (*g*) A woman in an ephah, a symbol of the removal of the people's sin to Shinar, the land of their enemies (v. 5-11). (*h*) Four chariots, with horses of different colours, go towards different quarters to execute God's judgments. One goes northward to "quiet His spirit," viz. towards Babylonia (vi. 1-8). After these visions comes a symbolical action, showing that the Branch, who is to be the true builder of the Temple, shall be both king and priest (vi. 9-15). And then, in answer to a question about fasts, the prophet declares that, as older prophets had taught, God does not delight in fasts (vii.), and the time is coming when fasts shall be turned into rejoicing (viii.) Throughout this part, though the language is highly figurative, the reference is clearly to the situation of the recently restored community.

2. The **second part** (ix.-xiv.) is very different, and seems to imply altogether different circumstances. It consists of two sections—(*a*) chaps. ix.-xi. Here we see trouble coming out of the north and sweeping over Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon, and the land of the Philistines (ix. 1-7). Jerusalem, however, is defended; her king comes to her meek and peaceful (ix. 8, 9); Judah and Ephraim united, with captives restored, overcome the Greeks (ix. 10-14); the Lord shall be their defence (ix. 15-17), and they shall seek no longer to diviners, but to the Lord their God (x. 1, 2). Then the same theme seems to be taken up again. Evil shepherds are punished (x. 3-5), Judah and Ephraim are restored from Egypt and Assyria, these countries are punished for their pride and oppression (x. 6-12), and an invasion of Lebanon and Bashan takes place (xi. 1-3). The prophet is then commanded to "feed the flock of slaughter" (xi. 4-8), but gives up the task (xi. 9-14); and the flock

passes into the hand of an evil shepherd (xi. 15-17). [And here, as some think, the passage xiii. 7-9 should also be taken.] (*b*) In chaps. xii.-xiv. we have: A gathering of nations against Jerusalem and their overthrow (xii. 1-9), the outpouring of the Spirit on Jerusalem, and the opening of a fountain for sin and uncleanness (xii. 10-xiii. 6). Chap. xiii. 7-9 is by many placed along with the preceding section, because it employs the same figure of the shepherd smitten and the flock scattered. And chap. xiv., in which all nations are gathered against Jerusalem, looks like a duplicate of chap. xii.

3. The foregoing analysis of contents will indicate how difficult it is to perceive the precise reference of the second part. The allusions to Ephraim (ix. 10-15; x. 7; xi. 14), to diviners (x. 2), and to Assyria (x. 10) have led many to assign chaps. ix.-xi. to a date preceding the fall of Samaria, while chaps. xii.-xiv. would also be pre-exilian, owing to the mention, *e.g.*, of false prophets (xiii. 2-6), though later than the time of Josiah, to whose death there is a reference in xii. 11. Others ascribe the whole of the second part to one writer, and some maintain that the whole is the work of Zechariah.

MALACHI

§ 74. Of the **personality** of Malachi nothing is recorded. His **date** is evidently later than that of Haggai and Zechariah, for the Temple service is now in operation; but the religious condition of the people is anything but flourishing. The **situation** implied in the book corresponds in remarkable particulars with that which existed in the time of Nehemiah; and accordingly the prophecy has generally been assigned to that period (somewhere about B.C. 445), although the "governor" alluded to in chap. i. 8 seems rather to be a foreigner. Malachi, like Haggai, addresses himself directly to the circum-

stances of his time, but looks forward also to a more glorious future.

1. The **name** Malachi means "my messenger" or "messenger of the Lord" (see iii. 1), and some have supposed it is a title of some unnamed prophet, or even of Ezra himself.

2. The following are the **chronological landmarks** for the period (compare § 72, 1) :—

B.C. 515. Temple completed.
„ 485-465. Reign of Xerxes. Esther queen (§ 88).
„ 465-425. Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus).
„ 458. Second return of captives under Ezra (Ezra vii. 1-9). **Malachi** somewhat later.
„ 445. Nehemiah appointed governor (Neh. ii. 1-11).
„ 444. Jerusalem fortified. Public reading of the Law.
„ 432. Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem (Neh. xiii. 6, 7).

3. The **situation** of the time may be gathered from the book. The Temple service is observed (i. 7, 8, 10, 12-14), but the priests are not blameless (i. 6 ; ii. 1, 7-9). At the same time the conduct of the people, in the matters of marriage and divorce (ii. 10 ff.) and neglect of tithes and offerings (iii. 8), recalls the reproofs of Nehemiah for similar sins (Neh. xiii. 10, 23).

4. In these circumstances the prophet addresses himself both to priests and people, and, according to the subject, we may divide the book into **two parts.** (*a*) God's special love had been shown to Israel in the past, but they had dishonoured Him by presenting blemished offerings ; and the chief blame in this matter rested on the *priests* (i.), who are contrasted with the ideal Levi of old (ii. 1-9). (*b*) The *people* also have violated God's ordinance and contracted mixed marriages (ii. 10-16). They have also murmured against the Lord that He made no distinction between the evil and the

good, and have been impatient for His interposition (ii. 17). But wrongly; for His messenger is about to prepare His way, and the Lord Himself will suddenly come to His Temple (iii. 1). Yet it is for judgment He will come; to separate the evil from the good (iii. 2-6, 13-18; iv. 1-3). And the cause of His delay has been the people's unfaithfulness, in which they have followed their fathers of old. When they give God His due and return to Him, then they will receive His blessing (iii. 7-12). "All nations shall call you happy: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

CHAPTER XXI

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

§ 75. THE book of Psalms belongs to what may be called distinctively the Hebrew **poetical literature.** The **name** by which it is usually designated in Hebrew—Book of Praises—is not strictly descriptive of the character of the Psalms, which exhibit great variety of tone; but it was not inappropriately applied to a collection that was specially **employed in** the service of **public worship.** Our name *Psalms* is simply an English form of the Greek title given by the Septuagint. The collection consists of a hundred and fifty compositions, of very various contents, extending over a very wide period, and divided into **five books.**

1. The characteristic of **Hebrew poetry** is not rhyme, but what is called parallelism. The divisions of verses, when placed side by side, are seen to have a similar rhythm, one member varying, carrying out, or expanding the thought of the preceding, or presenting a contrast to it. The R.V. has arranged the book of Psalms and other poetical compositions in lines which bring before the English reader this peculiarity of the original, so that there is no need to give examples here. Reference may be made to Psalm xix., which shows

also how the measure or rhythm may be varied (compare verses 1-6 with 7-9). No sharp distinction can be drawn between prose and poetical books in the Old Testament. The three books, Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, are classed together in the Hebrew Canon, and provided with special accents for a cantillation of their own (§ 17, end). With these three books we usually reckon also Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs (§ 3, Table I.) as poetical. But the book of Lamentations is also constructed on the poetical model; and many passages in the prophetical writings have strongly marked parallelism, though they are not divided into lines in the R.V. (see *e.g.* Isaiah lv., lx., etc.)

2. The Hebrew name for a single **psalm** (for its plural is not found) is *mizmôr*, from a word which means to play on the lyre, and this is the word found in the headings of the individual psalms. These compositions therefore are lyric, to be sung with musical accompaniment. The Greek word *psalmos* has the same meaning. The name "Praises" given to the whole is a different word, *Tehillim;* but only Psalm cxlv. is so designated in its title. The Greek word *Psalterion*, from which we have our "Psalter," was properly the name of a musical instrument, and came to be applied to the book of Psalms, somewhat as "Lyre" or "Harp of David" has been used as a title in modern times.

3. The Psalter was the **book of praise** in the second temple; and many of the Psalms, particularly towards the close of the collection, were evidently composed with a view to liturgical use. But, just as in the case of our Christian hymns, we are to distinguish the first production from the subsequent general adoption. The true poet gives expression to feelings which are echoed by many hearts.

4. The total **number** of the Psalms slightly varies in some ancient collections, but this arises from the conjoining of two contiguous psalms or the division of one psalm into two. The complete collection is authenticated by all the versions. The division into **five books**—which is marked in the R.V.—is also ancient, and is believed

to have been made in imitation of the fivefold division of the Pentateuch. And it is remarkable that we find in the Psalter the same variation in the use of the Divine names as appears in the Pentateuch (§ 32, 3), some of the books being predominantly Jehovistic and others distinctively Elohistic. No satisfactory explanation of this fact has yet been given.

§ 76. The **subjects** of the Psalms are so various, and even the contents of individual psalms so diversified, that it is impossible to make a satisfactory **classification** of them. One prevailing characteristic of them all is their reflective or subjective character. The aspect they present of religion is not so much that of a law given or a revelation made, as that of a truth apprehended and a guidance experienced. The Law, it has been said, is God's fivefold voice to man, and the Psalter is man's fivefold response to God. Accordingly, as religion was made known to Israel in connection with a wonderful and chequered national history, the Psalms are animated throughout by the two sentiments of piety and patriotism, while they rise or fall with the alternating hope and despondency which were produced by the vicissitudes of the nation's experience.

1. Lyric poetry always expresses the varying moods and feelings of the poet; and so the same psalm may give utterance to the opposite feelings of faith and doubt, hope and despair, passing rapidly from prayer to praise, and mingling the sighs of confession with songs of deliverance. Yet the dominant note of some psalms is so distinct, and the chief motive of the composition often so clearly indicated, that it is possible to form groups of kindred psalms, exhibiting the **leading themes** of the sacred poets. Thus there are :—

(*a.*) Psalms celebrating God's glory in *Creation:* viii., xix. (first half), xxix., civ., cxxxix.

(*b.*) Historical psalms: lxxvii., lxxviii., lxxxi., xcv., cv., cvi., cxiv., cxxxv., cxxxvi.

(*c.*) Psalms relating to the *King:* ii., xviii., xx., xxi., xlv., lxxii., lxxxix., ci., cx., cxxxii.

(*d.*) Psalms relating to *Jerusalem:* xlviii., lxxvi., lxxxvii., cxxii., cxxv., cxxxvii., cxliv.

(*e.*) Psalms in praise of the *Law:* i., xv., xix. (second half), cxix.

(*f.*) Psalms in the *prophetic* tone: xiv., l., lii., lviii., lxxxii., xciv.

(*g.*) *Speculative* psalms, in the manner of the "wisdom" literature (§ 79): xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii. Also xvi., xvii., xxii., lxix.

Other modes of classification have been attempted, as, *e.g.*, according to the **prevailing tone** and disposition of mind of the psalmist. Thus some psalms are predominantly *joyful,* as Psalms viii., xviii., xix., xxiii., xxix., xlvi., etc. Others exhibit a frame of mind which is *sad* and plaintive, as Psalms vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., lxix., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxiii., cii., etc. Others again proceed from a more composed and *reflective* state of mind, as Psalms i., xv., xlix., l., lxxiii., cxix., cxxxix., etc.

§ 77. The great majority of the Psalms are provided with headings or **titles,** which most probably were added some time after the composition of the Psalms. The significance of these is far from clear, but they seem to indicate the source from which the several psalms were derived, the character of the compositions, the melodies to which they were adapted, and the manner in which they were to be rendered with music. A comparison of these headings, taken along with a consideration of the contents of individual psalms, and of the fact that the whole Psalter consists of

five books, leads to the conclusion that the collection was gradually formed, and that it contains compositions belonging to very different dates in the history.

1. There are a hundred psalms in all which bear some person's name in the title; sixteen have headings without names; and thirty-four (called by the Jews "orphan psalms") have no heading whatever. The persons named in the titles are Moses (in Ps. xc.), David (in seventy-three psalms), Solomon (Psalms lxxii. and cxxvii.), the sons of Korah (eleven psalms), Asaph (twelve psalms), Heman (Ps. lxxxviii., which has also the name "of the sons of Korah"), and Ethan (lxxxix.)

2. The meanings of certain technical terms found in the titles can only be conjectured with varying degrees of probability. The R.V. gives a rendering of some of them in the margin: such as Nehiloth, *wind instruments* (Ps. v.); Sheminith, *the eighth* (Ps. xii.) So some are headed "on stringed instruments" (A.V. Neginoth, Ps. iv. etc.) All these, as well as Gittith (Ps. viii. etc.), Alamoth (xlvi.), Selah, are probably musical terms. Other expressions—Maschil (xlv. etc.), Michtam (xvi. etc.), Shiggaion (vii.)—seem to denote the character of the poem; while others still, such as Shoshannim (xlv. etc.), Muth-labben (ix.), Al-tashheth (lvii. etc.), Aijeleth hash-Shahar (xxii.), and Jonath elem rehokim (lvi.), are understood to be indications of well-known melodies to which the psalms were to be sung. Moreover, thirteen of the psalms which bear the name of "David" have brief notices indicating the occasions in his life to which they refer. It is to be remarked in general in regard to the headings, that, as they have various references, so they may have been prefixed at different periods; but they do not seem to be integral parts of the original compositions. The LXX. translators, even in their time, appear to have been as ignorant of the meaning of some of the terms as we are; and they modify the headings in many cases.

3. The titles, however, taken along with other indica-

tions, throw light upon the question of the **composition** of the Psalter. It will be observed that psalms with the same or similar titles are mostly grouped together. Thus Psalms lxxiii. to lxxxiii. are all entitled "of Asaph," and there is only one other psalm bearing that name (Ps. l.) So, the psalms "of the sons of Korah" stand all very nearly in succession (xlii., xliv.-xlix., lxxxiv., lxxxv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii.); and the most of the psalms "of David" are found in Books I. and II., the first book alone containing thirty-seven. So the songs "of Degrees" (or "Ascents," R.V.) are all found together (Psalms cxx.-cxxxiv.); and the Psalter concludes with a group of "Hallelujah" psalms (cxlvi.-cl See R.V. marg.) Now, at the conclusion of Ps. lxxii., after the doxology (vv. 18, 19), we find these words:—"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," a notice which must have been added (as a sort of *finis*) when a collection of psalms "of David" ended at that place, although other psalms with his name are found in subsequent parts of the present collection. The conclusion to which these facts point is that the Psalter attained its present form and dimensions by additions to a smaller collection or by the combination of several collections. As it now stands, it is a book made up of five books, each closing with a doxology, the whole of the last psalm being a doxology in itself. But beneath and anterior to this division we can recognise smaller groups of related psalms, and the titles may indicate the names by which the smaller collections were known.

4. It will follow from what has just been said that the individual psalms are of various **dates** and **authorship.** David is by universal tradition regarded as the founder of sacred psalmody, and the earliest collection would, no doubt, contain his compositions. Whether all the psalms inscribed with his name were regarded by the collectors as his composition is very doubtful: the way in which other names are prefixed, such as "*sons* of Korah," would suggest that the names stand not so much for authorship, as for titles of collections. And,

just as the book of Proverbs is spoken of as the Proverbs of Solomon, although it tells us distinctly that it contains proverbs by others (Prov. xxiv. 23; xxx. 1; xxxi. 1; see § 80), so the whole Psalm-book came to be spoken of as the "Psalms of David." It is perfectly clear that there are psalms as late in date as the exile (*e.g.* Ps. cxxxvii.), and even later (*e.g.* Ps. cxxvi.); and some maintain that many of them must be placed even in the time of the Maccabees. The collection has the appearance of having received additions, both of small groups and of individual psalms, at different times; but we must conclude that it had been for some time completed before it was incorporated into the Canon (§ 15).

§ 78. The book of Psalms is unique **as a portion of Old Testament Scripture.** It is not, like any of the prophetic books, the production of one particular period of history, but was the growth of centuries. In the psalms the singers of Israel have expressed the deepest feelings that struggled for utterance in the nation's heart, and through them the nation's history appears invested with a special character of *sacredness*. Though intensely personal and national, they are in accord with universal truth and experience; for, of all the references in the New Testament to the Old, the half are to this book; and the Church of Christ and individual believers in all ages have found no words better fitted to express their feelings in all vicissitudes than the words of the Psalms.

1. The existence of the Psalms as a distinct class of literature, side by side with the Law and the Prophets, is instructive as to the history and character of the **religion of Israel.** The Law shows what the religion *ought to be;* the prophets tell us very plainly what the religion of their times *was not;* the Psalms indicate what to some the religion *was*, and what many more wished that it

should be. They show that there was such a thing as a religion of the heart; and if many of the psalms were, as is maintained, of late date, and all of them were employed in the service of praise of the Second Temple, it is all the more remarkable that they were so highly prized at a time when the legal and formal tendency was setting in. But the tone in which the worship of the Temple and the ordinances of the Law are alluded to in the Psalms shows that to the devout under the old dispensation these things had their spiritual application. On such Scriptures as the Psalms, no doubt, were nurtured those devout souls who, during the centuries between the Old and the New Testaments, looked for the consolation of Israel.

2. As used in the worship of the Temple the Psalms would be expressive of the collective feelings of the community, and many of them were evidently composed with that intent. But the language of contrition and supplication for pardon must have been learned by personal experience before it could be applied to the nation; and it is their fitness to give utterance to personal experience that has made the Psalms the **devotional book of the world.** It is the task of literary criticism to discover, if possible, the occasions of the psalms and the external situations of the writers; but here the inferences of devout experience are not to be overlooked,—that that which goes straight to the individual heart must have come from the individual heart, and that what has in all ages been the answer of the soul to God must have been inspired and drawn forth by the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

§ 79. THE **name** of this book is not to be taker to indicate that it consists of a loose collection o wise or witty sayings. The book belongs to wha has been called the **wisdom literature** of th Hebrews, which is the nearest approach to specu lation or philosophy that we find in the Old Testament. It was the result of reflection turnec towards the practical side of life, and occupiec mainly with the two great problems of the mora government of the world, and the duty of mar placed in such a world as experience proves thi to be.

1. In **literary form** the book of Proverbs may b classed with the Psalms as poetical (§ 75, 1); for th tendency is to express the conclusions of reflection in measured, sententious phraseology. And so in the Revisec Version this book is arranged in parallelisms. The "proverb" (*mashal*) is properly a *similitude*, in which particular fact or statement is given as a representation of a general truth; and, besides the form of the simple proverb, it may take that of the fable (Jud. ix. 7 ff.; 2 Kings xiv. 9), the riddle (Jud. xiv. 12 ff.; 1 Kings x. 1, 2), the satire (Isa. xiv. 4; Hab. ii. 6), the parable (2 Sam. xii 1 ff.; Isa. v. 1, 2), or the allegory (Ezek. xvii. 2 ff.; xxiv

3 ff.) In **subject**, however, the book allies itself with Job and Ecclesiastes, which are of a more sustained speculative character. A few of the Psalms also run into the same strain. See Psalm xlix. and note verse 4; also Psalm lxxviii. and verse 2.

2. The "**wise**" were always famous in the East (see 2 Sam. xiv. 2; 1 Kings iv. 30; Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. 8), and proverbial literature must be very ancient, as is shown by the various forms of similitudes just mentioned. The absence, from this special class of books, of such allusions to Israel's national position and distinctive religious observances as are common in the prophetical and other writings, should not be regarded as indicating either ignorance of these or want of interest in them. Nor can it be taken as a proof of the late date of these compositions, for in later times the tendency was towards a national "particularism," more than to such a "universalism" as the wisdom literature exhibits. It must be taken as an indication of the many-sided aspect in which truth is presented in the Old Testament,—a proof that religion in its practical bearing upon life and conduct was from an early time a matter of study to the thoughtful part of the nation.

§ 80. The book itself tells us, by various headings, that it comes from **different sources**, two of the sections being ascribed to Solomon. The editing of one part of the collection is ascribed to "the men of Hezekiah" (xxv. 1); but whether the various sections are arranged in the order of their **dates**, or what was the time of their combination, it is very hard to say.

1. The following is a brief analysis of the **contents** of the book:—After a descriptive title showing the purpose of the collection (i. 1-6), viz. "to know wisdom and instruction . . . the words of the wise and their riddles" (v. 6, R.V. *marg.*), there is (*a*) the first section of proverbs, which may be entitled "the praise of wis-

dom" (i. 7-ix. 18), in the form of addresses by a father to his son (i. 8; ii. 1, etc.) Then comes (*b*) a large section, entitled "The Proverbs of Solomon" (x. 1-xxii. 16). These are proverbs in the strict sense, or maxims, arranged in no precise order, bearing on the nature, value, and fruits of good and bad conduct in various relations of life. (*c*) At xxii. 17 a new section seems to begin, containing "words of the wise"; it goes on to xxiv. 22, and has a supplementary collection of "sayings of the wise" (xxiv. 23-34). Next comes (*d*) another section of "Proverbs of Solomon" which the men of Hezekiah copied out (xxv.-xxix.); followed by (*e*) "the words of Agur" (xxx.), which are for the most part enigmatical sayings, in which *numbers* play a significant part; (*f*) "the words of king Lemuel" (xxxi. 1-9), homely maxims on practical life addressed to him by his mother; and (*g*) the praise of a virtuous woman (xxxi. 10-31), an alphabetical piece, in which each of the twenty-two verses of which it consists begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (comp. § 86, 3).

2. It has been pointed out that those "Proverbs of Solomon," which stand later in the book (xxv.-xxix.), have all the characteristics of the popular proverb, and may be earlier in date than the other section, similarly named, which stands earlier in the collection (x.-xxii.)

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BOOK OF JOB

§ 81. THIS book bears a **name** that has become a synonym for patience under suffering; but it is quite evident that it has a deeper purpose than to narrate the personal experiences of Job. The book belongs to the **class** of the wisdom literature (§§ 79, 87); and in artistic plan, poetical expression, and sustained argument, it takes the foremost place among compositions of this kind.

1. **Job** is mentioned (for the first time elsewhere) in Ezek. xiv. 14, 16, 20; and though it may be impossible to determine his date or native place, there is no reason to doubt his existence and remarkable experiences. At the same time, it would be doing injustice to the genius of the author of the book to suppose that he is nothing but a *verbatim* reporter of long speeches. He has constructed his book artistically, so as to make Job's experience a *similitude* (§ 79, 1) of general truths—a medium for giving expression to sustained reflection on a most perplexing problem.

2. The **contents** of this book are systematically laid out as follows:—

I. Prologue, in prose, telling how Job was afflicted, and how his three friends came to condole with him (i., ii.)

II. Colloquies of Job and his friends, in poetry (iii.-xxxi.), viz. : (1) First cycle (iii.-xiv.) : Job opens, and answers each in turn. (2) Second cycle (xv.-xxi.) : Eliphaz opens, and Job answers each in turn. (3) Third cycle (xxii.-xxvi.) : Eliphaz opens ; Zophar is silent. (4) Job's closing speech (xxvii.-xxxi.) ; Job the sole speaker.

III. Speeches of Elihu (xxxii.-xxxvii.), in poetry, except the opening.

IV. God answers Job out of the whirlwind (xxxviii. 1-xlii. 6). Job is now ashamed and penitent (xl. 3-5 ; xlii. 1-6).

V. Epilogue, in prose, telling how the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning (xlii. 7-17).

3. The literary character of this book is unsurpassed. The parallelism is well balanced, and the strophe system well marked. It exhibits poetic freshness and delicacy in the treatment of details, and as a complete poem, it is the nearest approach to the epic in sacred literature.

§ 82. As to the **date** of the book the most diverse opinions have been held ; for it has been assigned in turn to almost every period of Israelite history, from the Mosaic, or even pre-Mosaic, to the Exilian or post-Exilian. So, as to its **composition**, it has been disputed whether it is a unity, or how the different parts have been brought together. Moreover, although the great **theme** of the book is evident, viz. the sufferings of the righteous under the rule of a righteous God, there have been different opinions as to the precise manner in which the writer meant to state the problem, and the solution of it which he designed to convey.

1. As to the **date** of Job himself, the manner in which his life and circumstances are depicted (i., ii.) would indicate that in the national recollection, he

belonged to the patriarchal age, or at least that he lived under conditions such as are associated with the patriarchs, in some district eastward from Palestine, contiguous to the desert. The date of the *book*, however, is another matter; and perhaps no one now accepts the Jewish tradition which assigned it to the Mosaic age. The cultivation of the wisdom literature is specially associated with Solomon, and the advanced literary stage which the book exhibits requires it at least to be dated not before his time. Many, however, regard it as still later, some placing it in the period of the great prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and others in the Babylonian exile or after it. There is a striking resemblance between Jer. xx. 14 ff. and Job iii.; and in many respects the points discussed in Job have their parallels in Isaiah xl.-lxvi. The strongest reasons for the late date are the highly developed literary standard that has been attained, the advanced stage of reflection that has been reached, and the dark background of general suffering and moral disorder which is implied.

2. The **unity** and integrity of the book have been much discussed. There seems no sufficient reason for regarding the prologue and epilogue as later additions. They form an appropriate literary setting for the discourses; and the interest of the book is heightened by the recollection that both Job and his friends carry on their discussions in ignorance of what has taken place to bring about his sufferings. There are, however, some reasons for regarding the speeches of Elihu as later than the original book. Job takes no notice of them, and they interrupt the connection between his challenge and the reply of God. They add nothing substantially to the discussion, and may have come from a pious reader who wished to counteract the bold statements of Job with sentiments of greater reverence for God.

3. The **problem** discussed in the book is not the speculative question of the origin of evil; it is the practical question, why a righteous God inflicts suffering upon a good man. Job's friends urge that suffering is

the result of sin, and advise him to humble himself and search out his shortcomings. To this he replies that, though no man is pure from sin, he is not conscious of such guilt as his extraordinary sufferings seem to imply. Moreover, he urges, it is matter of universal experience that the wicked prosper while the good suffer; and it is this inequality under the rule of a righteous God that perplexes him. He fights against the horrible thought that God does not govern the world according to justice. His own case is but a *similitude* of a general principle; and amid many hard things that he utters against God, he is persuaded that if he could pierce through the mystery that surrounds Him, his cause would be justified and all made plain. So his consuming desire is to see his Maker face to face. And it is to be noticed that when God addresses Job out of the whirlwind, He does not reason with him or resolve his doubts. The substance of His reply is "Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?" (xl. 2 R.V.; compare Rom. ix. 20). And yet the revelation of Divine greatness made to Job, though it did not explain the mystery, was a *working solution* of the patriarch's doubts (xlii. 5, 6). A closer knowledge of God humbled him and gave him patience. It is the same practical solution of the same problem that is given by the psalmist "Nevertheless I am continually with thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 23); and Job was but carrying out the same line of thought when, in the certain prospect of his immediate dissolution, he confidently expected that he would afterwards see his Maker face to face, and Divine righteousness would be vindicated (xix. 25-27). Thus held fast between the bitter experiences of life and the belief in a righteous government of the world, the saints of the Old Testament were enabled to bear patiently their present ills, while they received glimpses of that full solution of the world's mystery which has been given in the resurrection of Christ.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIVE ROLLS

§ 83. By this title are designated those five small books, of very different contents and dates, which had the distinction of being read after the Law in the public service of the synagogue on five specified festivals or solemn days.

They are :—

i. The Song of Songs, or *Canticles*, which was read on the eighth day of the Feast of the Passover, from an allegorical interpretation of the book with a reference to the history of the Exodus.

ii. Ruth, which was read on the second day of the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, the feast of *harvest*.

iii. Lamentations, read on the ninth day of the month Ab, the traditional date of the destruction of both temples.

iv. Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher, read on the third day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the most joyful of all the feasts, because the book recommends the thankful enjoyment of the pleasures of life.

v. Esther, read at the Festival of Purim.

THE SONG OF SONGS

§ 84. It is generally believed that the title of this book is a *superlative* expression (like "heaven

of heavens") to indicate the best of songs; though some explain it in the sense of a song made up of different songs, or *canticles*, all having one subject —love. There is no doubt that different speakers are introduced, so as to give a **dramatic appearance** to the book; but they appear so abruptly that it is exceedingly difficult to say who or how many they are; and hence the determination of the **purpose** and **plan** of the whole book remains one of the most perplexing problems of Old Testament study.

1. In the original, the distinction of male and female **speakers** is indicated by the genders of the words. We can thus, so to speak, discriminate the *voices*, though we cannot clearly discern the *features* of the characters. In the R.V. a space between the verses denotes a change of speaker.

2. Of the **characters** of the piece, one can be traced throughout, viz. the "Shulammite," so named in vi. 13 R.V. and generally understood to be a maiden of Shunem (compare 2 Kings iv. 12). The "daughters of Jerusalem," who somewhat resemble the chorus in a Greek play, though subsidiary, are easily recognisable. The main question is whether the Shulammite has two suitors or only one; for according as this question is answered, the division of dialogue must be made and the interpretation of the whole carried out. (*a*) On the view that there is only one male speaker, it is the king who falls in love with a rustic maiden, and at length raises her to the position of his bride in the palace. The most of the dialogue on this view consists of the exchange of endearments between the lovers. (*b*) The other opinion, which many now hold, is that the Shulammite has been betrothed to a shepherd lover; but she has been noticed by Solomon and his retinue on some royal journey (vi. 10-13), brought to Jerusalem, and there, surrounded by the women of the palace, is plied with entreaties by

the king in the hope of winning her affections. On this view it is explained that those speeches of a rustic suitor, which do not befit the character of Solomon (see ii. 8-14), are the words of her absent lover, recalled by the maiden herself to confirm her in her devotion. Towards the close the parted lovers are united (viii. 5-7), and the conclusion of the whole seems to be that true love is unquenchable, and cannot be bought by wealth and position.

3. The conclusion to be drawn as to the **purpose** of the book depends upon the opinion we form of the characters introduced. On the view that has been last mentioned (*b* above), the book would have an **ethical** aim—to exhibit the triumph of pure, spontaneous love, over all worldly and unworthy enticements; and, the scene being laid in the time of Solomon (though the book could not thus have come from his hand), the protest would be all the more striking against the loose view of marriage which is associated with his reign. The lesson would be one on the sacredness of human love, which our Lord Himself emphasised (Matt. xix. 4-8, etc.) On the other view mentioned (*a* above), while some would regard the book as nothing more than a collection of love-songs, or a composite poem made up of songs such as are found in other Eastern literature, others think that the marriage of Solomon to Pharaoh's daughter, or to a Galilean maiden whom he raised to the throne, is made **typical** of a higher and spiritual love. On this ground they suppose the book was taken into the Canon, and has a counterpart in Psalm xlv. This may be called a modification of the earliest known mode of interpreting the book, which was **allegorical**. This view, found among the Jews as early as the Fourth Book of Esdras (end of the first century A.D.), and among Christian writers first in Origen (died A.D. 254), regarded the book as teaching symbolically the love of God to the nation of Israel, or to the Church, or to the individual soul; and the literature connected with the Song on this line of interpretation has been most extensive down to modern

times. It may be safely said that the book would not have been placed in the Canon had it been regarded merely as a collection of love-songs.

4. As a **literary work** the Song of Songs is remarkable, not only for the form in which it is cast, but for the highly poetical stamp which it bears throughout, and the glowing delight in Nature which it breathes. As to its **composition**, the indications of the language are thought to point either to a north-Palestinian or to a post-Exilian origin. The reference to Tirzah (vi. 4), which was the capital of the northern kingdom before Samaria (1 Kings xvi. 23, 24), is regarded by some as requiring a date anterior to Omri (*i.e.* about B.C. 920); but, on the other hand, there are peculiarities in the language which are usually regarded as characteristic of the post-Exilian period.

RUTH

§ 85. The book of Ruth, which is a graphic delineation of incidents occurring about a hundred years before the time of David, has its historical **place** where it stands in our English Bible, after the book of Judges (§ 6; § 37, 2), and is so placed in the LXX. Version. But being an independent production, and having with the other "rolls" been set apart for special synagogue use, it is classed with them in the Canon. One chief **purpose** of the book seems to be the tracing of the genealogy of David to the Moabite Ruth, whose name it bears.

1. The **contents** are familiar. Elimelech of Bethlehem goes, in the days of the Judges, with his wife Naomi and their two sons, to sojourn in Moab, where the two sons marry wives of the country. After the death of her husband and both her sons, Naomi returns

to her native Bethlehem, and one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, with clinging affection accompanies her. Ruth, while gleaning in the fields of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, finds favour in his eyes, and Naomi contrives to suggest to him that he should marry the Moabite widow. This, after the refusal of a nearer kinsman, he does, and thus Ruth becomes the ancestress of David.

2. **Composition.**—Although it is generally agreed that the book is an independent composition, there are differences of opinion as to its date. Many modern writers pronounce it to be as late as the exile or even later, partly owing to peculiarities of the language, partly from the manner in which it refers to old customs (iv. 1-12). On the other hand, the language as a whole is quite different from that of admittedly late books, and shows as much purity as *e.g.* the books of Samuel. The advocates of an early date rely much on the argument that the marriage of an Israelite with a Moabite would have seemed offensive to a writer after the exile (see Ezra ix., x.; Neh. xiii. 23-29).

LAMENTATIONS

§ 86. This book is designated in the Jewish Canon simply by its first word *How!* which is the word with which an elegy usually begins. Our name Lamentations is translated from the title of the Greek Version. The book consists of five elegies or lamentations, each occupying a chapter, and all referring to one subject, the destruction of Jerusalem, which it dwells upon and presents from different sides.

1. The "lament" or elegy was a well-known form of composition (see Amos v. 1, 2; Isa. xiv. 4-21; 2 Sam. i. 17-27, iii. 33, 34; Jer. ix. 10, 17-21; Ezek. xxvi. 17, 18, and observe the frequency and impressiveness of the *How!*)

2. The different **aspects of the** great common **theme** are in a manner indicated in the opening verse of each chapter, thus: (i. 1) "How doth the city sit solitary!"—the *desolation* of Jerusalem; (ii. 1) "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger!"—the *cause* of the calamity, God's anger; (iii. 1) "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath"—the nation personified takes the affliction to heart; (iv. 1) "How is the gold become dim!"—*contrast* between the present and the past; (v. 1) "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us":—the nation's appeal to the nation's God.

3. The **literary form** of these five elegies has been artistically constructed. It will be observed that each of the chapters, except iii., consists of twenty-two verses, and that chap. iii. contains three times twenty-two, or sixty-six verses. Now there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet; and all the chapters, except the last, are alphabetical—*i.e.* the verses are made to begin in succession with the successive letters, one verse being given to each letter in chaps. i. ii. and iv., and three successive verses to one letter in chap. iii. Chap. v., though not alphabetical, is made to consist of twenty-two verses. The length of the line and of the verse (what in an English poem we should call the metre) varies also in the different chapters, as may be perceived in the arrangement of the R.V.

4. **Authorship.** In the LXX. Version there is prefixed to Lamentations the following statement:—"And it came to pass, after Israel was led into captivity, and Jerusalem laid waste, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said . . ." The ascription of the book to the prophet is thus ancient, and many in modern times assign it in whole or in part to him. It is admitted generally that the elegies must have been written by one or more persons in or near the times in which he lived. The situation is indicated, *e.g.*, in chap. ii. 9; iv. 20—the city in ruins and the king in captivity; and the

whole burden of the book is the outpouring of grief under a crushing present calamity. The "ninth of Ab" is a dark day in the Jewish calendar (§ 83, 3); and no book in the Old Testament Canon exhibits more pathetically than this the patriotic attachment of the race to their city and land, and the intense emotion which was excited by the ruin that came upon the people through their unfaithfulness.

ECCLESIASTES

§ 87. This **name**, which our version has simply adopted in its Greek form from the LXX., is meant to be a translation of the Hebrew title *Kohéleth*, the meaning of which, however, is not certain. The book belongs to the class of **reflective** or speculative literature (§§ 21, 79); but its **date** cannot be precisely determined. And though it is deeply interesting throughout, and plain and pithy in its style, the **aim and purpose** of its composition have given rise to much discussion.

1. The name **Koheleth** is etymologically related to the word which is translated in our version *congregation;* but it is active and feminine in form. Hence it has been taken as an epithet of Wisdom, calling together and addressing an assembly (see Prov. i. 20; viii. 1). Jerome renders it by the Latin *concionator*, from which our version has "The *Preacher*" (R.V. *marg.* great orator). A name of a feminine form might be borne by a man (as Sophereth in Neh. vii. 57); but the manner in which Koheleth is identified with Solomon (i. 1, 12), and the tone of address generally, lead to the conclusion that the name is meant to be descriptive. Some have explained it as meaning "assembly," and have regarded the book as a collection of opinions or

addresses by different wise men. But it is evident that the book is one whole, treating of one theme and prosecuting one great line of thought throughout—the question of the moral government of the world (compare the book of Job, §§ 81, 82).

2. **Authorship.** The traditional view of the synagogue that Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes may be said to be abandoned in modern times. The terms in which Solomon is mentioned in i. 12 ("was king")[1] indicate that the writer put his meditations in the mouth of one who was renowned for wisdom and wide experience; but there is not a word of regret for the follies which stained the life of Solomon, nor could he have spoken as this writer does of the oppression of rulers and the tears of the oppressed (iii. 16; iv. 1; v. 8) if he were the ruler himself. But the language of the original is decisive. The book must be late if there is any history in the Hebrew language; and the only question is, How late? It must, at all events, be earlier than Ecclesiasticus, which was written B.C. 200 (see § 9), for that book presupposes the existence of this. Materials for arriving at some conclusion on the point are: the references contained in the book to the condition of society in which the writer lived, and the mode and tone of thought which he exhibits. These indications lead many in modern times to assign the book to the Persian period (B.C. 538-331; see § 51, 1), and probably towards its close: though others would bring it down even later.

3. **Analysis of Contents.** The absence of a clear literary plan makes it difficult to arrange the contents of the book systematically. Facts are looked at from different sides and in various relations; the same subject recurs at different points; and the conclusions drawn are not always formally consistent with one another. Hence some have regarded the book as the work of a sceptic, or the expression of varying moods and fancies.

[1] Note also the words: "above all that were before me in Jerusalem," i. 16 R.V. Compare ii. 7, 9.

Yet a closer examination shows that this is not the case: the conclusions the writer comes to at various stages are virtually the same, and when he returns to his subject, it is to consider it on a different plane, or from another side. He begins by stating his theme: All is vanity, there is nothing new under the sun (i. 1-11), *i.e.* human life has no substantial result. He then gives proof from practical experience. He had tried, and found that vain is the quest for knowledge (i. 12-18), vain the pursuit of pleasure (ii. 1-10), vain the profit of labour and activity (ii. 11-23). The conclusion is that there is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of his labour (ii. 24); for all depends upon God, and man can only submit (ii. 24-iii. 22). He then takes a wider survey of human life and society (iv.-vi.), interspersing various maxims of conduct to be followed in the prevailing "vanity"; and the question, "Who knoweth what is good for man in his life?" suggests the praise of true wisdom, and calls forth maxims on the way to attain it (vii., viii.), leading on to a consideration of political wisdom (ix., x.) The dark background is always the vanity or unprofitableness of life; yet the Preacher's position is not a pessimism nor a creed of despair. Life is good, though neither the best nor the last good; benevolence is to be practised (xi. 1-8); and the young especially are exhorted to live joyfully, yet with a regard to a coming judgment (xi. 9-xii. 8).

4. From the foregoing analysis we may infer the **aim and purpose** of the book. It exhibits the reflections of one whose lot had been cast in evil times. Though he does not enjoy the buoyant hope of the old prophets, he is not without faith in God. It is the struggle between this faith and the hard facts of experience that gives the mournful turn to his thoughts (compare § 82, 3). Desponding as his words read to us, it no doubt cost him a severe effort in his day to be so confident as he is, in the face of the inequalities and disorders he saw in the world. His knowledge of a future life is but limited (iii. 19, 20; vi. 6; ix. 5, 10; comp. §§ 82, 83), as such

knowledge was in Old Testament times generally; so that if we are disposed to regard his conclusions as inadequate, it is because we have been taught to look at life and its problems in a purer and brighter light, and privileged to know that our labour is *not vain* in the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 58).

ESTHER

§ 88. This book takes its **name** from the Jewish maiden who is the principal character in the episode of history which it relates. It belongs to the **Persian period** (§ 51, 1), for Ahasuerus has been identified with Xerxes, who succeeded Darius in the year 485 B.C., and reigned twenty years (see the dates in § 74, 2). The book is in several respects unique as a literary **composition** of the Old Testament; and though its right to stand in the **Canon** has been disputed both by Jews and Christians, it acquired in later Judaism a place of even undue regard, and is often denoted as *the* roll, by way of pre-eminence above the other four.

1. The name of **Xerxes** appears in the Persian inscriptions as Kshyarsha, and all that we know of his character and reign agrees with the representations given in this book. He was capricious, passionate, and subject to the influence of court favourites; and it is to be noted that, between the third year of his reign, when he made the feast to his princes and servants (i. 3), and the seventh year, when Esther was made queen (ii. 16), took place the Greek war which was so disastrous to the Persians (Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis B.C. 480).

2. The **contents** of the book are familiar. The king having, in a fit of temper, repudiated his queen Vashti, Esther is chosen from among the fairest maidens of the Empire to take her place. She was the adopted

daughter of Mordecai, a Jew, but she did not disclose her nationality in the palace. Haman, the king's favourite minister, offended at the want of respect shown him by Mordecai, casts *lots* for a favourable day to present his petition, and obtains a decree for the extermination of the Jews and the alienation of their property. Mordecai makes known this plot to Esther, and entreats her to intervene in her nation's behalf. This she resolves to do; and, to carry out her plan, invites the king and Haman to a banquet. Haman, elated, prepares a gallows on which to hang Mordecai; while the king, during a sleepless night, has the records of the kingdom read to him, and discovers that Mordecai had on one occasion saved his life, and that this service to the state had remained unrewarded. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" he asks Haman when they meet next day, and Haman, thinking only of himself, suggests a royal proclamation and a public procession. Haman's plot is revealed by Esther, and he is made to suffer the punishment he had devised for his enemy. A royal letter is then despatched to the provinces permitting the Jews to defend themselves; they inflict a bloody vengeance on their enemies, and celebrate their deliverance in a general rejoicing. And thus originated the Feast of *Purim* or lots.

3. The **purpose** of the book was no doubt to explain how the feast of Purim came to be observed; and the mere existence of such a feast is a guarantee for the historical character of the story. Already in the second book of Maccabees the feast is referred to as "the day of Mordecai"; and though attempts have been made to explain its origin otherwise, and doubts have been expressed regarding some details of the story, the substantial accuracy of the writer has not been disproved.

4. The reception of the book into the **Canon** was not without opposition even among the Jews; and in some of the early Christian lists of canonical books it is wanting. It has often been remarked that the name of God is not once mentioned in the book; and it exhibits

plainly the spirit of exclusiveness and national pride that came to be a characteristic of later Judaism. Yet it has valuable lessons to teach as to the dealings of Providence, and is instructive as an episode in the wonderful history of a wonderful people.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

§ 89. THIS book takes its **name** from the Hebrew prophet who was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and rose to eminence at the court of the Chaldean and Persian kings. In **language, style,** and **contents** it is very unlike the prophetical books; and has not been placed among them, but with the Hagiographa in the third division of the Canon.

1. The only references to **Daniel** in the Old Testament outside this book are two brief allusions in Ezekiel, in one of which (xiv. 14) he is associated with Noah and Job as an example of piety, and in the other (xxviii. 3) he is extolled for wisdom. The chief facts of his personal history given in this book are: that he was carried away from Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 605 (i. 1); that, along with three other noble Hebrew youths he was instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, and employed in the king's service (i.), attaining with his companions to great dignity (ii. 48, 49); and that he remained in high office till the third year of Cyrus the Persian (B.C. 535). At every step of his career he is distinguished by the two qualities of piety and wisdom with which Ezekiel associates his name.

2. There are **two dialects** of language in the book of Daniel; the portion extending from chap. ii. 4 to chap. vii. 28 being in Aramaic (see ii. 4, R.V. *marg.*), or what is often (though improperly) called Chaldee.[1] This was not the language of the Chaldean Empire, but a dialect akin to Hebrew, which by degrees came to be the spoken tongue of the Jews in post-Exilian times (see also § 91, 2). The rest of the book is in Hebrew; but it exhibits several Persian, and even a few Greek words; and it has, besides, features that are characteristic of a late stage of the language.

3. In **style** also the book of Daniel is peculiar. The writer does not use the common prophetic expression "Thus saith the Lord" (and the disjunction of the book from the prophetical writings used to be explained by saying that Daniel was not a prophet by *office* but by gift); nor does he, as the prophets usually do, address the people of his time. His predictions are highly symbolical, and in their representation of the future, apocalyptical; herein resembling parts of Zechariah, and furnishing a model for the New Testament Apocalypse.

4. According to the subject-matter the **contents** of the book fall into two great divisions: of which the former narrates incidents in which Daniel had a prominent part (i.-vi.), and the latter contains four visions which he saw (vii.-xii.) In the *first division* we have (*a*) Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal figure of composite elements, with Daniel's interpretation (ii.); (*b*) Daniel's three companions cast into the furnace for refusing to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up (iii.); (*c*) Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great tree, with Daniel's interpretation (iv.); (*d*) Belshazzar's feast, and Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall (v.); (*e*) Daniel cast into the den of lions and delivered (vi.) In the *second division* we have an account of four visions seen by Daniel, viz. (*a*) the vision of four beasts coming up from the sea, with

[1] Syrian or Syriack (A.V.) is more appropriate than Chaldee. The Hebrew name of Syria is Aram.

the heavenly assize, and dominion given to one like unto a son of man (vii.); (*b*) the vision of the ram with two horns, overcome by a he-goat with "a notable horn" between its eyes; which in turn is replaced by four horns, and out of one of them comes forth "a little horn" which persecutes the saints, abolishes sacrifice, and profanes the sanctuary (viii.); (*c*) the angel Gabriel explains to Daniel the seventy years of Jeremiah as seventy weeks of years (ix.); (*d*) an angel who has had to contend with the "prince" of Persia appears to Daniel and announces that, aided by Michael the "prince," he will again contend on behalf of Israel, first with the "prince" of Persia, and then with the "prince" of Greece (x.-xii.)

§ 90. There are difficulties, arising both from the form and from the contents of the book, in the way of determining the date of its **composition**, and understanding the reference of some of its parts. There is, however, no difficulty in perceiving the main drift of the **predictive portions**, and in recognising the **practical value** of the book as a part of the Old Testament Scripture.

1. The features of the language that have been mentioned are against assigning the composition of the book as it now stands to the period in which Daniel himself is placed. The language is very different from that of his contemporary Ezekiel, and "in general character resembles the Hebrew of the Chronicler, who wrote shortly before the beginning of the Greek period"[1] (*i.e.* B.C. 332, see § 51, 1). On other grounds than those of language, many, in modern times, date the composition of the book about the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the beginning of the Maccabean period (after B.C. 170). It may be observed that the assigning of the book to so late a date does not necessarily imply that the book is not historically accurate, for we do not know what

[1] Delitzsch.

older materials such a late writer might employ. Difficulties have been raised as to the identification of Belshazzar and Darius the Mede; but it is more probable that our own knowledge of those remote times is defective than that the writer should have drawn upon his fancy in such matters.

2. The prophetic visions in the second part of the book, and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chap. ii., have the same general import—the rise and fall of successive world-powers and the final triumph of the kingdom of God. In chaps. ii. and vii. there is a succession of four great powers; but there are differences of opinion as to the empires indicated, particularly the fourth. The view that used to be held is that the empires are (1) the Chaldean, (2) the Medo-Persian (Cyrus), (3) the Macedonian (Alexander and his successors), and (4) the Roman (divided afterwards into east and west). But many modern writers separate the Median from the Persian, and make the four to be, the Chaldean, the Median, the Persian, and the Macedonian (which broke up into the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies). If the Roman Empire is intended, as many still suppose, the book, even on the latest date assigned to it, would be predictive. If the fourth empire is the Macedonian, and the writer lived under Antiochus Epiphanes, though not strictly predictive, the book would have a *prophetic* significance, as exhibiting, in one comprehensive scheme, the rise and fall of successive empires in the unfolding of Providence. And in any case, the clear indication of the triumph of the kingdom of God, the power of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (ii. 45), and the dominion given to one like unto a son of man (vii. 13 R.V.), are indubitable proofs of the strong Messianic hope which sustained the writer in what was evidently a time of deep distress; and the conception of God as the source of all wisdom and power (ii. 20-23), ruling all things in heaven and earth for the execution of His purpose, would give confidence and patience to those to whom the book was addressed.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

§ 91. THESE two books are in the Hebrew Canon counted as one, and were originally one book, although made up of various elements. The names that have come to be attached to them conveniently indicate the period of history to which they relate, and the activity of the two men who took the most prominent part in the consolidation of post-Exilian Judaism.

1. The two books were in the earliest times spoken of collectively as "Ezra"; and Origen, who is the first to speak of them as two, which he names First and Second Ezra, states particularly that in the Hebrew original they were but one. They stand in the Hebrew Bible after Daniel and before Chronicles; but it will be observed that Ezra begins with the closing words of Chronicles, so that the series, as arranged in our English Version, forms a connected history.

2. Those parts in the two books which are expressed in the *first person* must be ascribed to Ezra and Nehemiah respectively (see Ezra vii. 27 - viii. 34; ix.; Neh. i. 1-vii. 73; xii. 27-43; xiii. 4-31). Other parts, however, which speak of the two leaders in the *third person*, seem to be from another hand (see Ezra i. 1-8; iii.-iv. 6; vi. 19-22; vii. 1-11; x. 1-19; Neh. xii. 44-xiii. 3). Besides these narrative portions, various lists, derived from some official sources, have been

incorporated in both books (see Ezra i. 9-11; ii. (compare Neh. vii. 6-73); x. 20-44; Neh. iii.; x. 1-27; xi. 3-36; xii. 1-26). We even find in the book of Ezra two pieces in Aramaic (§ 89, 2) apparently extracted from some chronicle in that dialect (Ezra iv. 7-vi. 18; and vii. 12-26). In endeavouring to determine the date of a composite writing of this kind, we look for the latest ascertainable fact that is mentioned. Now we find that in one place (Neh. xii. 26) the times of Nehemiah and Ezra are spoken of as past, in another (Neh. xii. 10, 11) the list of high priests is brought down to Jaddua, who, according to Josephus, was a contemporary of Alexander the Great, while in still another passage (Neh. xii. 22) Darius *the Persian* is named, who is most probably Darius Codomannus, the last Persian king (B.C. 336-331). The latest writer, therefore, whose hand can be detected in these books, must have lived in the Greek period (§ 51, 1); and many believe he was the author of the books of Chronicles, which are later in date than Ezra-Nehemiah.

3. The whole **period** of history covered by the books is a little over a century, viz. from the first year of Cyrus, B.C. 536 (Ezra i. 1) to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes I., B.C. 432 (Neh. xiii. 6). But they do not give a connected or complete history of the period, as will be seen from the following scheme :—

(*a*) Before Ezra's arrival. Ezra i.-vi., B.C. 536-515. In this period Haggai and Zechariah prophesied (see §§ 72, 73).

(*b*) Fifty-seven years without record, viz. B.C. 515-458.

(*c*) Arrival of Ezra. Ezra vii.-x., B.C. 458.

(*d*) Thirteen years without mention of Ezra, viz. B.C. 458-445.

(*e*) Joint activity of Ezra and Nehemiah. Neh. i.-xiii., B.C. 445-432. Here probably is to be placed the prophecy of Malachi (see § 74).

4. The **leading events** in this period are the following :—

(*a*) In the twenty-one years preceding the appearance of Ezra at Jerusalem, the colony under Zerubbabel (also named Sheshbazzar) and Joshua had set up an altar for burnt offering and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, and then proceeded to lay the foundations of the temple. In the work of building they were hindered by the Samaritans, and it was not till the sixth year of Darius that the temple was finished.

(*b*) In order to fill up the blank of the narrative, and to understand the condition of things on Ezra's arrival, it is necessary to note the succession of Persian kings in the period referred to. Between Cyrus and Darius there intervened a space of about eight years, covered by the reign of Cambyses, son of Cyrus, and the brief usurpation of the Pseudo-Smerdis. Some have identified these with the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra iv. 6, 7; but it is generally agreed that the latter names stand for Xerxes I. and Artaxerxes I., who *succeeded* Darius. The passage iv. 6-23 would thus give a summary statement of repeated or continued efforts on the part of the Samaritans to hinder the work, and prepare us for the situation in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

(*c*) Ezra with his colony arrived in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, *i.e.* B.C. 458, the journey having occupied four months (Ezra viii. 1-32; compare vii. 8-10). On his arrival he found things even worse than he had expected. The people had contracted mixed marriages and conformed to heathen customs; and even the priests and Levites were involved in the trespass. Ezra sat down astonied till the evening sacrifice (Ezra ix. 1-4); and, moved by his confession of the national backsliding (ix. 5-15), the leaders bound themselves by oath to put away their heathen wives and aid him in the cleansing of the community (x.)

(*d*) All that is recorded of Ezra's activity up to this point could not have occupied long time, and we hear no more of him for thirteen years, when Nehemiah appears upon the scene. Whether he was at Jerusalem

all the time, and if so, how he was employed, we do not know. What follows, taken along with the passage Ezra iv. 6-23, shows that the position of the colony was, in the interval, one of great hardship and depression.

(*e*) Nehemiah arrived in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, *i.e.* B.C. 445, entrusted with full powers as governor, which only added to the enmity of the Samaritans (Neh. ii. 1-10). Unmoved by opposition he took in hand the repair of the walls (Neh. ii. 11-iii. 32), keeping his builders under arms to repel hostile attacks of Ammonites and Arabians (Neh. iv.), at the same time attending to the wants of the poor (Neh. v.) In fifty-two days, notwithstanding plots of his adversaries and unfaithfulness within Jerusalem itself, the walls were completed, and faithful men appointed to keep the gates (Neh. vi. 1-vii. 4). And only when all this is accomplished, in the beginning of the seventh month (Neh. vii. 73), Ezra again appears. This was on the memorable occasion when the Law was publicly read at a great assembly of the people (Neh. viii. 1-12); then followed a great observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, at which there was a similar daily reading of the Law (viii. 13-18). The people separated themselves from strangers (ix. 1-3), and bound themselves by solemn covenant to carry out the requirements of the Law (ix. 4-x. 39); measures were taken for bringing a sufficient population to reside within the city (xi.); and the completed walls were dedicated by a solemn procession (xii.) Nehemiah was recalled to the court of Persia in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, B.C. 432 (Neh. xiii. 6). We are not told how long he was absent, but on his return he found that the old abuses had crept in, the high priest being a glaring culprit (Neh. xiii. 7, 28); and the book concludes rather abruptly with the energetic measures taken by the governor against the offenders (xiii. 7-31).

5. The details furnished in these books, fragmentary as they are, have the greatest significance in the history of the Jewish people. Two outstanding facts are here

seen which are characteristic of the period, and influenced the succeeding history down to the time of the New Testament. The one is the position which the written Word from this time takes in the religious life of the people (see § 13),—a position which it continued to hold, though it gradually degenerated into an inordinate regard for the letter, and a punctilious cultivation of the study of the Law. The other is the opposition of the Samaritans, which developed into a rival worship, and a religious animosity which is a characteristic of the New Testament time. These two facts are deserving of very careful attention in connection with the much-disputed question as to the date of certain parts of the Pentateuch (§ 33, 3). It is well known that the Samaritans have the same Pentateuch as the Jews (§ 41, 1); and it must, therefore, have been a completed work at the time of the schism. If, however, a great part of it was for the first time composed by Ezra or about his time, as many modern critics assert, it is very difficult to understand how the Samaritans should have, just at this time, concurrently with the Jews, conceived such a high regard for "Scripture"; and still more difficult to understand how the Samaritans, with their bitter opposition to the Jews, should have accepted a code newly elaborated by the latter. It is much more reasonable to conclude that the reverence for the written law, and the acceptance of it on the part of both, indicate a common belief in the high antiquity and authority of the book.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

§ 92. THESE two books (like those of Samuel and Kings) form **one whole**. The **name** given to them in our version was suggested by Jerome, who described them as "a chronicle of the whole of sacred history." It is more appropriate than the title given by the LXX., viz. *Paraleipomena*, or "things passed over," which was bestowed with the idea that they were intended to supplement preceding historical books. A very slight examination of their contents shows that, though later than the books of Kings, they form an **independent** work, with a **plan** and **purpose** of their own.

1. The **Hebrew name** given to these books is "Acts" or "Affairs of the Times," i.e. *annals* or *journals*. This was the name given to the official records kept at the courts of the kings (§ 48, 3), and seems to have been applied to formal books of history based upon or made up of materials drawn from such sources (see 2 Chron. xvi. 11; xxv. 26; xxviii. 26; xxxii. 32; also 2 Chron. xxvii. 7; xxxv. 27; xxxvi. 8). The work, or works, referred to in these passages can scarcely have been the records of the individual reigns to which the writer of the books of Kings referred, though the similarity of language would imply that the same primary documents lie at the foundation of both Kings and Chronicles. That the book of Chronicles was not intended to be a supplementary work is shown by the repetition

of many things which had been narrated in Kings, whole sections agreeing very closely in actual words (§ 32, 4).

2. The difference in **literary plan** of these books as compared with the earlier historical books is apparent at a glance. In the series from Genesis to Second Kings each book takes up the history where the preceding drops it, so that in the whole series of separate books we have one continuous history from the Creation to the Babylonian Captivity. Chronicles, on the other hand, is complete in itself, and it covers the whole history from Adam down to the Restoration from Captivity and even much later. To do this in the compass of one book (or a book in two divisions) the writer had to adopt a very different **style**, which, as we shall see, is also characteristic of the point of view from which he wrote and the purpose he had before him.

3. There can be no doubt that these books are of **late authorship**. Not only is this apparent in the language, but it is proved by the point to which the history is brought down, and the still later date to which the genealogies are carried. The descendants of David are traced to the sixth generation after Zerubbabel (1 Chron. iii. 19 ff.), which would bring the composition down to the close of the Persian or the beginning of the Greek period (§ 51, 1). It is believed by many that the compiler of the Chronicles had an active share in arranging the materials which now form the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (see § 91, 2 end).

4. This lateness of date, and the situation of the writer which it implies, throw light upon the **purpose** he had in view and the peculiar manner in which he has worked it out. National independence was gone, and the Jewish People were under the sway of a heathen power. Two national possessions however remained—the religion and the descendants of the royal house of David. Looking back over the past, the writer perceived that the prosperity of his people had risen or fallen with their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the requirements of their religion; and the only hope he could see for the future lay in adherence to the old faith and the observance of its forms. It was a

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time at which attention was being more and more given to the ceremonies of worship. Hence we perceive the fitness of the two great characteristics of this book. (*a*) The history is almost entirely confined to the kingdom of Judah, the northern kingdom being alluded to only when its affairs touch those of the southern, while the whole Davidic line passes in review. In that line lay the promise of the future, as it was the chosen line in the past. (*b*) Not only does the writer, in common with other Biblical historians, treat the history from a religious point of view, but he is peculiar in the stress he lays on religious *observances*. He has more to say of the temple and its ritual than of the wars of the kings; and he dwells with special emphasis on the reigns of kings who had been distinguished for zeal in religion and reformation in worship. Thus he narrates at length the removal of the ark to Jerusalem in David's reign (1 Chron. xv., xvi.), and dwells upon the steps which that king took for the building of the temple (1 Chron. xvii., xxviii., xxix.) It is the same in the succeeding reigns, when he mentions the steps taken by Jehoshaphat for instructing the people in the Law (2 Chron. xvii. 7-9), and gives full details of the reforming work of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix.-xxxii.), and the more thorough reformation in the time of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv., xxxv.) This predilection gives a priestly colouring to the book, so that we have genealogical and family lists in which the priests and Levites figure largely (see 1 Chron. vi., xxiii.-xxvi.), although the activity of prophets is not overlooked (see 2 Chron. x. 15; xi. 2; xii. 5; xv. 1; xvi. 7). By the time the author wrote, a prevailing priestly tendency had set in, and he looked at the past history in that light. Nevertheless we must not conclude that he drew upon his imagination for facts which are not recorded elsewhere; although it is not difficult to see that, from the point at which he stood, the course might tend, as it did tend, towards the dull period of legalism and formalism which preceded the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel.

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